


# ugvm

The [uk.games.video.misc](http://uk.games.video.misc) Magazine



## STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

### Inside

#### MULTIPLAYER RULES

Don't fight over the joypads, children...

#### NEOGEO POCKET

The GBA, in a parallel universe.

#### GOING LIVE!

A Schofield-free look at Xbox online gaming.

#### KEYBOARDLESS 2

Computers into Consoles, The Second Coming.

#### MORE REVIEWS

It's Christmas, so Santa needs a hand choosing!

## Issue 07

# ugvm

We'll be decked in all black,  
Slamming the pit fantastic, Officer  
Friendly's little boy's got a  
mohawk, And he knows just  
where we're coming from, It's  
industrial, work it underground,  
Get down, get down, get down...

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## Issue 07

# Welcome



Isn't Christmas wonderful? All those shops  
full of snotty children demanding toys that  
their parents could only afford with a second  
mortgage.

Queues so long you wonder if they are in fact just circles of people,  
slowly rotating. Christmas muzak in every shop, playing yuletide  
"hits" from yesteryear. Marvellous.

But cry no more, for **ugvm** is here to brighten your life (again). This  
issue, we bring you more reviews than ever before. And, since it's  
Christmas, we've concentrated on good games. Aren't we nice?

We also have some great features for you to enjoy - **Multiplayer  
Etiquette**, **The Life Of... The NeoGeo Pocket Colour**, and an  
expansive guide to **Xbox Live**. Now the days are short and the  
weather cold and wet, you'll no doubt rather be inside playing games  
online, wouldn't you?

There's also the second part of ugvm05's **Keyboardless** article,  
looking this time at the Commodore CDTV and CD32. Add to this all  
the usual ugvm loveliness, such as the Seaman Diary, My Top 5... and  
plenty of **other** stuff, including an **ECTS Report** over on page 36, and  
you'll soon realise that **ugvm** is a Christmas present come early.

Hurrah for mince pies!

deKay (Editor)

## What's Inside This Issue...



### KOTOR

Best Star Wars  
game ever?  
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### NGPC

Could have been a  
Game Boy beater...  
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## Keyboardless 2

Commodore's continual  
console catastrophes  
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## Live! it Up

Everything you need  
to know (and some  
other stuff) about  
Microsoft's online  
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the Xbox.  
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## Review Scores Explained

**ugvm** uses a marks-out-of-5 system for scoring games in the reviews. We feel that percentage systems are silly, with there being little difference between, say, 75 and 76%. Marks out of 10 are often pointless as well, as very rarely do games score under 5 or 6/10. Having 5 points to the scale lets us get down to the nitty-gritty: is this game any good, or is it just a pile of old pants?

You can think of the scores as being roughly equivalent to these simple to digest phrases:

**1/5 - "Not even worth a look"**

**2/5 - "Only think about it if you're a real fan of this type of game"**

**3/5 - "Average. Probably still playable, but not the best of its kind"**

**4/5 - "A good game, perhaps with just one or two minor flaws"**

**5/5 - "You need to own this game. Now."**



## Awards

Games which score 4/5 also gain the coveted **ugvm Silver Award**, and games achieving the top marks of 5/5 are awarded the even more fantastic **ugvm Gold Award**. These awards are to show that these games really are something you want to play.



## Comment

### 'Tis the Season

Jolly old Saint **Tim Miller** has a word of warning about your festivities...

As we near Christmas, a number of big-name games come out in the shops. Mario Kart: Double Dash!! on the Gamecube, GTA 3/VC on the Xbox, Pro Evolution Soccer 3 on the PS2, True Crime on all formats; all have been keenly anticipated by gamers the world over. And many of those gamers will be disappointed.

No, this has nothing to do with shops understocking, nor to do with relatives buying the wrong version come Christmas day. This is to do with expectations, and how people build them up to a level that's impossible to meet, let alone exceed. For example, since Mario Kart:DD was first announced, it's been billed as one of the best games of this generation. People expect it to work miracles. And when it doesn't, they complain that it's no good.

MK:DD is an excellent game, and a great progression in the series. GTA on the Xbox will be great, even if it is just a PC port. PES3 will be the best football game ever, even if it's not massively different from the previous iteration. And True Crime will be a fun game, even if it doesn't last forever. If you find yourself disappointed by any of these games, maybe you should consider that it's not the games that are at fault, it's your expectations. Don't spend so long looking forward to new games, and you may well find yourself pleasantly surprised.

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# ugvm News

## New F-Zero Game

On release "Real Soon Now" in Japan, is this new F-Zero game for the Game Boy Advance. From the shot below, it doesn't look much different to the F-Zero GBA title of old, but it most certainly is.



F-Zero: Falcon Densetsu, based on the F-Zero cartoon series in Japan (meaning something along the lines of Falcon Legend) is mission orientated. From what we've seen these will take the form of completing a lap in a set time, or without crashing. Other times you will have to race a rival. It seems to have an RPG element too, as screens from the Japanese version appear to be stats-filled. No European release date has been set as yet, and our recommendation is that you don't go importing the Japanese version unless you can read the lingo - it's completely incomprehensible otherwise.

## Next N-Gage Wave

Nokia have recently announced its next batch of N-Gage titles. No, don't all cheer at once.



The next wave of games will include Sega Rally, Ghost Recon, a WWE game, and most mind boggling of all, Worms - a game no doubt broken by the N-Gage's wrong-way-up screen. Nokia plan on there being 50 to 100 games available for the phone/mp3 player/console/radio by the end of 2004.

## Free Zelda!

On the 1st December, Nintendo put 1000 copies of its Nintendo Collectors' Edition Zelda disc on the UK Stars Catalogue. They lasted four and a half hours before they had all been taken, but it's expected that the disc may be returned at some point in the future. The disc, containing the two NES games and the two N64 games, along with a Wind Waker demo, has been available free in the Mario Kart plus Gamecube pack, and will also come with Gamecubes bought after the 1st December.

For those not in the know, the Stars Catalogue is a kind of loyalty points system for Nintendo-owning gamers. Each Nintendo-published game, and selected hardware, comes with a code which is exchanged for Stars on Nintendo Europe's website. These can, in turn, be traded for items such as desktop wallpaper, web browser 'skins' and other such stuff. Until recently, 'real world' items were unavailable, but now Nintendo have been adding limited numbers of Game Boy Players, GC and GBA games, and now this Zelda disc.

## Advertising News

There's a lot of adverts for Project Gotham 2 on the TV already, and this is set to increase as BT's collaboration with Microsoft, promoting the idea of playing online via broadband, takes off. The number of videogames adverts always peaks just before Christmas, which means that advertising spend to get a game noticed is exponentially higher. Maybe Microsoft's decision to push a number of games back to next year is a good one.

## Larry's Back

Good news for fans of sleazy point-and-click adventures - Leisure Suit Larry is coming back! More correctly, his equally lecherous nephew, also called Larry, is the star in a new adventure: Magna Cum Laude. Expect a release (f'nar) at some point (f'nar) near the end (f'nar) of 2004.

## Happy Birthday Edge!

So, Edge has turned 10. They've got a sense of pomposity around them, granted, but maybe for once it's justified. No, developers probably don't write games to get an "Edge ten". No, publishers probably don't sign up games based on Edge first impressions. But they may be responsible for games being taken more seriously.

When Edge was first released, the videogames magazine market consisted of a number of "immature" titles - Mean Machines, C&VG, Sega Power ... it seems as if a requirement for such publications was to use the maximum number of colours on one page, and reduce the text so more pictures could be fitted on. Indeed, look at C&VG now and it's almost become a caricature of the format. Since Edge appeared, games have appeared in the Guardian's guide, in the Times, even on the BBC's news pages. Many other magazines are appealing (or have appealed) to an older audience,

such as Arcade, the Official Dreamcast Magazine, GamesTM and (to a slightly lesser extent, maybe), PSNext. Is this a direct influence of Edge, though, or is it just that gamers (and gaming) have grown up?

Edge isn't immune from succumbing to trends. As gaming has become more serious, many gamers have started to feel that the fun aspect has disappeared. Edge also feels this, or at least seems to - a recent issue had an anime boy on the cover holding a lightgun (a Master System Phaser, to be exact) to his head - the theme of the issue was "becoming bored with videogames". Are we bored with games because we are told to be bored with games? In that respect, Edge may have more influence than we would like.

But it's quite possible that Edge isn't responsible for any of this - as we said, gamers have grown up, and the ennui and apathy is a natural part of this.

Whatever, happy birthday Edge. Here's to another ten years.

## PSX Specs Reduced

Remember Sony's soon to be released PSX machine? The thing with a built-in PS2, which also has "enhanced media capabilities"?

Sony have announced that it will now sport rather fewer of these capabilities, due to not being able "to complete development in time for the year-end sales period". The axed features include: playback of DVD+RW discs, the reading of CD-R data discs, displaying TIF and GIF format images (only jpeg is now supported), displaying films taken with Sony's Cybershot digital cameras and MP3 playback. In addition, it will no longer connect to Sony's broadband gaming service, and the read speed of the

DVD drive has been reduced to 12x from 24x. It will still play both PS1 and PS2 titles, CDs, DVDs and ATRAC3 encoded audio.



## News In Brief

### Microsoft Wants Your Money

Not content with upping the Xbox Live starter pack price from £40 to £50 next year, Microsoft's also looking to extract more money from you with 'premium content'. The first example of this has just been released for MechAssault, and gives you two new gametypes and three new maps for £3.63. OK, hardly extortionate, but the last few batches of downloads for the same game were free...

### The Dreamcast Soldiers On

Think Sega's white box is dead? Far from it. With a larger installed base than the Xbox in Japan, new games continue to be leaked out - the latest to be announced is Psyvariar 2, due out at the end of February. For those not wishing to import, the PAL version of the first game will be released shortly at a budget price, and a PS2 version of the sequel is expected in May next year. In case you didn't know, Psyvariar, just like 90% of all new DC games, is an excellent scrolling schmup.

### Are you Sexy?

In an effort to make gaming more cool, hip, down wid da kids, etc, gamer.tv has been running a hotornot-style "sexiest gamer" competition. The final is to be hosted by Vernon Kay, who apparently is "no stranger to the catwalk and his spontaneous wit and charming Bolton accent make him a huge hit with both male and female viewers of all ages". Whether or not he's ever played a videogame is unclear. As is whether or not anyone finds the 'I need a haircut' look attractive.



# Multiplayer Etiquette

You can't just go barging round your mate's with a copy of *Wolfenstein* and expect to get the best joypad, sit nearest the TV, and spill beer over their Xbox. You need to follow the rules: **Tim Miller** lays them down...

The games night - the highlight of a gamer's social life? Probably not, granted, but it's a rare gamer indeed who's never pitted themselves against a human opponent, won, and let a smug smirk escape from their face. Playing against other people isn't *just* all about the fun. Sure, you can have fun if you lay 76 Thwomps on Mario Party 4, but you have more fun if you lay 128, can look at Player Two, and laugh. Multiplayer gaming is about winning, about beating someone else, about knowing that, for that game, you were the best, and nobody else could touch you.

Now, before we go any further, there will be a certain number of people tutting to themselves, and wondering why there's been (and will be) no mention of lobbies, lag, and clans, amongst other things. There is a reason - this article is not concerned with online gaming. We're concerning ourselves with crowding around a TV, all in one room, not face-to-face as much as shoulder-to-shoulder, and with pizza making the joypads sticky.

Multiplayer gaming when young is a limited pastime - asking your mum if it'd be OK to have a couple of friends round, having to do your homework before they got there or after they left at 8pm. For real multiplayer experiences, you had to hope that your Scout group held a videogames evening. Adult



multiplayer is a different kettle of fish - not only can your friends come around whenever you like, and stay until the sun starts to shine the next morning, but there's also alcohol. Alcohol, which can make losing that much harder, and which can lead to many of the previously unwritten guidelines of gaming nights being broken.

It's these guidelines which we're looking at today.

## Player One

Player One is an important position; often only Player One can select the battlefield to be played on, or the rules of the game. Even if any player can change the options, only Player One should be given this responsibility.

Player One has the first choice of joypad - normally, this will be their own (and this norm should be encouraged). Player One must choose the first game to be played, and be able to start the evening with as little hassle as possible.

Who is Player One, then? Normally, the owner of the console, who in turn is normally the owner of the house/flat. But if you're playing a game supplied by someone else, that may need to change - the owner of that game may need to be Player One in order to navigate the menus efficiently.

## Number Of Players

Where possible, there should be an even number of players. The optimum number is four, of course, as this is the number supported in a lot of recent games. However, it is easy to run some sort of rota if the number of players is greater, or if you will be playing two-player games.



If there are three players, then games which require players to be placed in teams present an awkward problem. You should take account of the ability of the computer; if the CPU AI is poor, then the best player should be paired with it. If the CPU plays well, a poor player is a good match. Try and rotate who is in which team. There is little enjoyment in being able to always win.

## Player Four

The title of Player Four is an unenviable one. Player Four is often a last-minute addition to make up numbers, and is sometimes a non-gamer (see below). In four-way deathmatches, it is customary to either pick on Player Four so you may increase your score tenfold, or leave them to bumble around fighting the controls while the rest of you actually play the game.

## Non-players

On occasion, it may be possible for a large number of people to attend the games night. However, this may lead to games when not everyone can participate, and you will end up with non-players.

Do not panic. Non-players can exist even when there are four committed gamers present - playing Street Fighter 2 ensures this. Non-players, whether for five minutes or for the entire meeting, should be expected to act in the same way. They should not attempt to distract or disrupt, since a game won against a disabled opponent is a game not won at all.

On the other hand, providing the players with food is welcome.

## Food

Whatever food is provided, it should be quick to prepare and easy to eat. Unlike other forms of entertainment, games require you to be able to use your hands, so knives and forks are unwanted. At the same time, however, getting grease on controllers is far from desirable, so serviettes should be provided.



## Choice Of Games

Single-player games are, of course, generally a no-no. The exceptions to this guideline are:

- ♦ When a new game was bought on the day of the games night, and the player wants to show it off or try it out. This should last no more than 10 minutes;
- ♦ If it's to be played while others are busy elsewhere (cooking dinner, on the phone); or
- ♦ If it's to be played by each player in turn.

Each gaming group will have their particular favourites. In general, consensus on which game to be played should be reached through debate, but Player One has the casting vote.

Any games that are new should be played first, to allow for a second playing later if the game merits it.

## Girls

Girls are people too; there is no reason to consider them 'special', since they may well play better than you.

## Non-gamers

The appearance of a non-gamer at a games evening is a strange event, and can lead to a conundrum. Do you get them to join in, probably as Player Four, or do





## Feature

you allow them to simply watch? What type of non-gamer are they?

There are two main types of people who don't play games: those that dislike them, and those that haven't played them. Both types, if attending a games night, are valid targets for conversion. The type of game played should be adjusted to compensate for this - think Super Monkey Ball rather than Conflict: Desert Storm - and the softer approach to Player Four, of not just killing the player to improve your score, should be adopted.

Participation should be encouraged, but if a committed non-gamer is refusing to join in, they must abide by the non-players' rules. Or leave.

### Winning And Losing

The age of modesty is not dead, but at a games night it's certainly on its last legs. Victory celebrations should not be understated, except in a few circumstances:

- ♦ when the game was unbalanced, and the stronger side won easily; the losers will then not have enjoyed the game, and may be unwilling to continue if they're made to feel too bad;
- ♦ when it's half three in the morning, and you have no energy for extravagance; and
- ♦ when you fancy a member of the opposing team. You'll look more desirable if you shrug it off.

### Leaving

The games night does not have to finish when the first person decides to leave. However, it's not uncommon that one person quitting will make the rest realise that they are too tired to continue.

Contrary to traditional etiquette, the host should not expect any help with clearing up after a games night. The host invited friends around to play games, not to chat in the kitchen while washing up. While this may seem unfair, bear in mind that it is expected that all those attending will host their own games nights.

Finally, it is customary for at least one attender to forget to take home a game, memory card or controller, necessitating another meeting in the near future. This also allows the host to hold mock power over one attender for a period of time, through "deleting the Zelda save" threats.

Happy multiplayer gaming!

So much for general etiquette. We want to know what rules you find important when holding a games night. Email your rules to [rules@ugvm.org.uk](mailto:rules@ugvm.org.uk) and we'll compile a followup article using the best ones.

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## Never Miss Out!

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Each issue, **ugvm** looks at a machine from the past. There's no way that anyone could possibly hope to own each and every gaming machine ever released - not even the BFI's got there yet, and they've been trying for years. This article should carry a health warning therefore: reading about other consoles could seriously damage your wallet.

# Nice Good Players Choice

This issue, **Jim Taylor** takes us through the sad (and very short) life of one of the few contenders to the Game Boy's crown - SNK's NeoGeo Pocket Colo(u)r.

Attempting to crack a company's monopoly on a market is a dangerous gambit. No one expected the Jaguar to sell, and as we all know it didn't. But then no one expected Sony to beat Sega and Nintendo at their own game and we know how that turned out. So it was with hushed whispers and a curious glance that SNK made their abortive foray into the world of the handheld, up against the biggest selling console of all time: the Game Boy.

No stranger to facing an uphill battle, SNK had previously launched the original Neo Geo Pocket back on 27 October 1998; however, as the console was black and white and was up against Nintendo's recently launched Game Boy Colour, a colour version was the next logical step to make. So, the NeoGeo Pocket Colour (or NGPC as it shall from hereon in be known) was launched on 19 March 1999 and was the first mass-market attempt to break the Game Boy's stranglehold on the portable gaming market since the days of the Game Gear and the Lynx.

SNK appeared to have everything they needed to succeed: a technically superior console with a unique micro-switched joystick, a good collection of games, a nice little built-in mini-OS, street-smart advertising in a Sony mould and good retail presence. Sadly, much like every other handheld which has faced the GB, it was not to be, in part due to the all-conquering Pokémon and in part due to a takeover of SNK and then a fairly major lack of support from them, more of which later...

The NGPC was released in Japan first in March 1999 where sales were respectable, it was then rolled to the US where it started off quite conservatively with direct sales before moving into retail stores in June 1999. Word of mouth spread online and the console began to gain a small but dedicated following, something SNK is used to. In Europe the console was launched in September 1999 with copious magazine adverts in both the specialist press and magazines such as *The Face*, combined with good presence in most major games and entertainment retailers. The scene was set for a new entrant into the handheld market.

While most gamers may have heard the name Neo-Geo only a small subsection actually own one of their consoles. The public at large, of course, had never even heard the name before; SNK therefore had to show that they meant business. One of their first big announcements was that they would be teaming up with Capcom to release two games: the first a card battling game and the second a beat-em-up featuring fighters from both companies - SNK vs Capcom: Match of the Millennium. Card Fighters Clash was never destined to sell in great numbers despite it being a fantastic game, so most were looking forward to Match of the Millennium: they were not to be disappointed and MOTM was one of the best and biggest selling games for the diminutive console.

Further collaborations were to come as SNK announced that a deal had been struck to bring Sega



Sonic Pocket Adventure



Neo Turf Masters



Crush Roller

## Feature

games to the platform, the first being a conversion of addictive puzzler Puyo Pop. This deal also extended to linking up certain games with the Dreamcast - KOF: Dream Match on the DC and KOF: R2 on the NGPC to name one example. Unfortunately the cable never made it out of Japan. Despite this, in a similar manner to the Capcom games people were more anxious for what lay in store: the handheld debut of Sonic the Hedgehog, a new game based on the Mega Drive Sonics and a return to the classic side-scrolling action sorely lacking in the Dreamcast's Sonic Adventure. Yet again another fantastic game and another title in SNK's growing portfolio of "killer apps".

Frustratingly for those in Europe both MOTM and Sonic came out about three months earlier in the US, which led to quite a lot of NGPC owners, most of whom were not averse to importing, to get their games from the States. This meant that when the games eventually came out in Europe, sales figures were a lot lower than they would have been had the release dates been nearer. Despite this (or because of it) Europe actually received a number of games prior to the US releases, most notably *The Last Blade* and *Faselei*, two games which came out a number of weeks prior to SNK's pullout from the US and Europe and never saw release in the US. Europe also had the added bonus of games coming in hard plastic cases which became known as "clamshells" whereas the US received games in cardboard boxes similar to GBA games. Europe getting things better than the US? Who would have thought it? Some considered it a sign that it was not meant to be...

### The End

In April 2000 the average NGPC game was selling around 2,000 copies a quarter while the average GB game was selling around 10,000. Although not selling

spectacularly the NGPC was carving out a niche for itself. One small problem with these figures is that the average GB game doesn't include Pokémon, which sold over 180,000 copies that quarter. Erk.

It therefore didn't come as much surprise that although holding its own in Europe, when facing the all-conquering Pokémon sales didn't look too hot. In the US things were even worse, games and consoles were only really selling at a 1:1 ratio - i.e. people who were buying an NGPC were only buying one game and no more.

Now despite this you could have thought that SNK, who have a history of supporting a minority platform, would be able to keep the NGPC going. Sadly however, a corporate takeover put paid to any such hope. In January 2000 SNK was taken over by Aruze, primarily a manufacturer of Pachinko machines. Most took no notice of this news but a few had their doubts as to why a pachinko maker was purchasing one of the most well-loved "hardcore" gaming companies. Sadly their doubts later proved to be well-founded: In June 2000 Aruze made the controversial decision to pull out of all international markets and close all foreign offices. This meant that all games sitting in warehouses were trashed, including the US release of *The Last Blade*, and that some games instantly became collectors' items, namely the aforementioned *The Last Blade* and *Faselei*, both initially fetching prices of £70-100 on eBay. To ensure a tidy pull-out SNK offered to buy back any games from retailers; while some took them up on this offer, primarily in the US, in Europe at least most retailers sold as much as they could before sending back the remnants. The pull-out also meant that certain peripherals such as the MP3 player and a mooted wireless link-up were canned, despite being shown at the Tokyo Games Show earlier in the year.



Shanghai Mini



Neo Mystery Bonus



Dark Arms (Beast Busters)



Samurai Shodown! 2



## Handheld Perfection

While it never looked like SNK stood much chance of toppling the GB they could have made some inroads and been able to hold their own given enough time and money, both things which Aruze took away. Indeed it was confirmed relatively recently that the NGPC had a 2% market share in the US and they were aiming for 10%, a figure they could have easily reached given the time and resources to do so.

Despite the failure of the console as a mass-market success, in its short shelf-life the NGPC managed to attract a number of hardcore fans together with a good selection of high-quality games. It's only a shame it wasn't given a true chance to show what it could do.

### Where to buy?

If we've whetted your appetite for portable hardcore heaven (or something) then you should be able to pick up an NGPC on eBay for around £20-£40 depending on the colour and condition. Most games go for around £10 stretching all the way up to £30-£40 for the rarer ones.

## Further Info

For those interested in what happened to SNK next, see any of these sites:  
[www.penny-arcade.com/snk\\_1.php3](http://www.penny-arcade.com/snk_1.php3)  
[www.gaming-age.com/news/2003/5/20-55](http://www.gaming-age.com/news/2003/5/20-55)  
[insertcredit.com/news/e3\\_2003/sNK/index3.html](http://insertcredit.com/news/e3_2003/sNK/index3.html)

And for the most comprehensive NGPC site still about: [www.classicgaming.com/sngp/](http://www.classicgaming.com/sngp/)



### SNK vs Capcom: Match of the Millennium

A perfect little beat-em-up featuring the cream of SNK and Capcom's rosters, made all the better for the NGPC's joystick. See **ugvm06** for a full review.



### Metal Slug 2nd Mission

A totally new Metal Slug game based on Metal Slug 2 on the Neo Geo. Horribly difficult (natch) but highly addictive and lovely graphics.



### The Last Blade

While not as easy to play or on the eye as MOTM The Last Blade is an intricate hardcore beat-em-up player's dream. Many collectables and unlockables mean you'll be playing this for ages.



### SNK vs Capcom: Card Fighters Clash

The first game in the SNK/Capcom collaboration and a fantastic card battling game. Came in both SNK and Capcom versions both of which were, of course, very addictive.



### Ganbare Neo Poke Kun

Ganbare is a little man who lives in your NGPC. And people come to visit him. Then he goes to work to build mini-games for you. It's... odd. But good. And great fun.

## What's your flavour?

The Game Boy was the first console to take advantage of coloured plastics so it was only natural for SNK to do the same. The Neo Geo Pocket (that is the black and white version) came in a myriad of colours: Carbon, Black Crystal, White Platinum, Blue Platinum Silver Platinum, and White.

Following shortly after came the Neo Geo Pocket Colour which came in these colours: Camouflage Blue, Carbon Black, Crystal White, Maple Blue, Platinum Blue, and Platinum Silver.

Finally, SNK released the "New Neo Geo Pocket Colour" in October 1999 which was basically a smaller version of the standard NGPC (by 13%) only available in Japan. It was available in these colours: Crystal, Crystal Blue, Crystal Yellow, Pearl Blue, Solid Silver, Platinum Blue, Carbon Black, and Camouflage Blue.

Combine all the above with limited edition colours and editions and you have a collectors' dream if ever we've seen one.





# The Simpsons: Hit and Run

GTA + The Simpsons: Does it add up to a good game? **Neil Hopkins** does the maths.

This game consists of a linear set of missions mixed with free roaming exploration in Springfield. Each character gets a series of seven or eight missions that must be completed before progressing to the next stage, with bonus missions and races that can be completed at any time. The mission types are diverse, with races, collecting items, evading pursuit, destroying vehicles and even a couple of platform jumping pedestrian sections. There are wasp cameras to destroy (uhh, it's a plot thing) and coins and cards to collect to unlock a multiplayer mini racing game. You are free to go back to any level to finish collecting cards or just to pootle around for fun.

As in GTA, you can get out of the car and wander around committing acts of random mayhem. Many things can be destroyed for extra cash, pedestrians can be kicked or run over (the violence is mild though), and any car can be hijacked at will. Each criminal act bumps up a 'Hit & Run' meter - filling it up triggers a full-scale police pursuit with a fine if you are caught.



The graphics are well rendered with occasional camera glitches when you get too close to a building. In addition, the camera angle sometimes makes it difficult to see the

billboard gags. The lighting and incidental effects are better than you might expect on a game of this type, with the sea views on the Lisa missions being very reminiscent of Vice City.

The sound is similarly good - there are plenty of character catchphrases to be heard, even though they do tend to repeat after a while, and the music for each mission is suitably appropriate ranging from variations on the Simpsons theme tune, through seventies cop funk to Bollywood epic.

The best aspect of the game is the profusion of Simpsons humour in the form of sight gags, throwaway catchphrases and some groan worthy puns and pop culture references in the mission names ("The Fat and the Furious", "Bart 'n' Frink" and "Petty Theft Homer") for example. If you enjoy the TV show then you will almost certainly find something to laugh at here.

In conclusion, this game is much more than a cheap GTA rip off and is eminently suitable for all ages. Some of the missions may be a little tricky for younger players, but not impossible with some help.

4/5







# Castlevania: The Lament of Innocence

A new 3D Castlevania: **Paul Tomlin** whips us up a review.

I bet most people reading this are expecting me to outline the plot here. I expect most of those people (or at least those familiar with Konami's Castlevania series) expect the plot outline to begin with Dracula rising from the dead again after a thousand or so years to recommence being all evil and terrifying, only for one guy with a poxy little whip to destroy him, at least until the next Castlevania game.

But I'm not going to, because Konami have decided to jump back and tell the story of how the first Belmont became the first of the vampire hunters the clan is known for, in a move which no doubt completely throws away the established series structure much to the horror of its fans.

This new Castlevania, whilst now 3D, takes its basic cue from the popular Symphony of the Night and the recent GBA games (although the more cynical will no doubt read that as "Metroid"). The game has a number of fairly large areas connected which you can explore with a reasonable degree of freedom, scattered with hidden rooms and secrets for those who pay attention to the surroundings. It isn't quite like the other recent Castlevania games - the castle isn't wholly interlocking, being split up into smaller areas accessed by a central hub. You are given relative freedom to tackle these in whichever order you wish bar the first and last, and there are secrets and additional items which will require items found in other areas to unlock, but mostly

these areas are self-contained and can be tackled one after the other unless you wish to increase your chances against the game's final boss.

The basic gameplay is mostly fighting, with only a handful of rooms which devolve into any kind of platforming. Fighting is done with the traditional Castlevania whip, with you having weak and strong attacks which can be strung together into combo attacks (more of which are unlocked the more you fight). You also have a supplementary weapon, which uses the consumable hearts you obtain from destroying the candle sticks scattered around the castle. The effects of these are wide ranging, and change depending on which Orb (obtained by defeating the bosses) you have equipped. The monsters are reasonably varied, and require a few different strategies in order to be defeated.

Superficially, the game looks to be about on par with comparable Capcom efforts such as the Devil May Cry series. Character models are excellent, and the locales are mostly highly varied (with the possible exception of some of the connecting corridors, which look a little 'identikit'). The music is excellent too, and it also plays very well.

Unfortunately, it's not all great news. There is probably a little too much backtracking for most peoples liking, although this is only really an issue if you are the completist sort who likes to unlock everything. The plot is pretty bland and predictable. Most crucially, it's pretty damn short. There is little to stop a dedicated gamer from ploughing through this game in a single sitting in three or four hours. As is, and despite the addition of a couple of bonus characters unlocked from completion, it's just too short to provide a satisfying slice of gaming action. That's not to say it isn't great while it lasts, but this is one to pick up cheap six months down the line rather than new.

**3/5**



# Rez

**Jim Taylor** reviews Rez: The Marmite of games. Mmmmm, Marmite.

"It's Tron!" was the comment from one of my friends on first seeing Rez's vector-style graphics. And you can see why he said it, at first glance Rez does appear to resemble the pioneering 1982 film. Indeed even the plot of entering a mainframe to wipe out viruses to liberate the central AI sounds familiar. Fortunately technology has moved on somewhat in the last 10 years so while Rez may look a bit like Tron at first glance you'll soon see how much better Rez's understated graphics look. There's no David Warner in Rez though.

On the surface Rez appears to be a shallow experience, an old school, on-rails shoot-em-up with basic graphics and limited kill everything gameplay. And while it may seem that way at first: targeting enemies with A held down then releasing to let off a volley of shots, wash, rinse, repeat - you'll soon find there's more depth than you first thought. Not least once you actually understand how to play the game and really get into it. The key, you see, lies in the music...

Once you really start playing you'll find yourself drawn into a psychedelic world of beautiful graphics linked with mesmerizing sound. And it's in this partnership of music and sound that Rez shows its true colours: play with the sound off and you miss out on one of the most immersive gaming experiences out there. It's one of those games where you sit down to play and the next thing you realise it's 4 hours later. The immersive effect is increased tenfold if you hook up your DC/PS2 to a widescreen TV and a nice big (read: loud) stereo and turn the lights off. It's a game that although you can just race through it you'll (hopefully) want to sit and play it through enjoying every minute.

Although there are only 5 levels proper there are quite a few different modes and bonus levels to open, most of which will take many concerted hours of gameplay to unlock. Some are merely different colour schemes to the existing levels, others are



whole new levels in their own right. Add to that a "traveling" mode that lets you play through the game without taking damage and an addictive score attack mode and you realise there's a lot more beneath the surface than first appears. It's in this that the main draw of the game lies as nearly every shoot-em-up addict will testify.

However Rez isn't for everyone, many dislike the aforementioned on-rails gameplay and others take umbrage with the simplistic graphical style of the game. Plus, as with any shoot-em-up there are those who will complete it once and not care for returning to beat their scores or to unlock the extras. It's a game where any discussion on the topic draws a large number of participants praising or damning it, you only need look at some of the reviews it garnered on its release for proof of this, rating the game anywhere between fantastic and dire.

Despite being roundly ignored by the public, Rez is one of those games that while not really doing anything new seems to revolutionise an apparently worn-out genre. While loath to say it, it is an ideal "chill out" game, the sort of thing you can play for hours at a time with no thought for the outside world. Some may argue that it's not all that people say it is but in this reviewer's opinion Rez is one of the best, most original games available and in an ideal world would be owned by everyone.

5/5







# Ape Escape

We tried to get an infinite number of monkeys to write this review, but we only found one - **Russell Marks**

Grab an analogue pad, take a large dose of Mario 64 with a hint of Sonic, shut your eyes and think... monkey.

Yes, Ape Escape knows the classics well enough, and the gameplay captures more of Mario 64's feel than you might have thought possible. But the big gimmick that stops this being just another 3D platformer, apart from that excellent feel and the range of gadgets you build up as you work through the game, is catching monkeys. They start off slow and easy to catch, but later on they get quite devious in the ways they'll evade capture.

As you'd imagine, stealth is one of your main weapons against the monkeys - but don't worry if you find that sort of thing tedious, there's no heavy-handed requirement for stealth here. If you'd rather chase a monkey and have to avoid banana skins, bullets, UFO attack, etc. you're quite able to. Or you can even out-think them, as some will tend to follow recognisable patterns.



The use of the dual analogue sticks (required to play the game) ranges from eccentric to inspired; there are a lot of ways two sticks can be used, and it's fair to say that Ape Escape has them all. But the various control methods tend to work surprisingly well, and only rarely do they get in the way.

There's plenty to like about the game. The graphics are predictably low on polygons but enthusiastically bold and colourful. The largely generated music is decent enough, and not playing music from CD helps keep loading delays minimal. Then there's the minigames you get as rewards for finding semi-hidden coins throughout the levels, which are quite nice little games in their own right.

It's not all good though - the main problem is the camera. Manual camera positioning is made fairly easy (the d-pad is dedicated to it!) which offsets this to a great extent, but it can still get in the way at times. The game is perhaps a little shorter than it could have been. And the voice acting (especially for Katie) is just a bit too aggressively localised and children's-TV-ish in the PAL version.

That said, there's no denying that this is one of the very best platformers on the platform (so to speak), and the monkey-catching makes an already-good game into something of a classic. PS and PS2 owners should rate this one as a must-have.

5/5





# Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer

**deKay** goes surfin', surfin' in the bath...

It is prudent to point out, right away, that this is not just another Tony Hawk's clone. It looks like one, and the controls are similar, and Tony is even in the game (as a hidden character) – but this is not Tony-on-surf. Honest.

The first thing to hit you with this game, once you start playing, is the water. It isn't just that there's a lot of it, it's the graphical quality of it. The way the sun glints off it, the spray, the movement of the waves - truly superb. The water in each of the game's beaches is different too, reflecting the environment and time of day. The music too really adds to the atmosphere, with some quiet jazz and a bit of steel drumming – a real difference to the punk-rock of other extreme sports games. It's all very laid back.

But how does it play? Very well, considering you're limited to what is effectively just a quarter-pipe on which to pull off your tricks. Thankfully, you have three main types of trick to perform – face tricks, air tricks, and tube tricks. Air tricks are similar (both technically and name-wise) to those skate stunts you may have come across in Tony Hawk's, but tube and face tricks are something new. There are also assorted specials, and you can even 'grind' the crest of the wave, or ride the top of the tube, should you be brave enough.

Also unlike Tony, Kelly focuses more on points and

combos than goals and collecting, although these do exist to a more limited level. Each beach generally requires you to hit a target score, pull off a list of tricks, or perform a special trick whilst you are photographed. You are also often required to keep your special bar (filled by doing tricks) full for a set time, or jump obstacles such as a pier or other surfers at some point during your run. Although these targets are replicated to a large extent for each beach, they do get harder and as each beach has a different kind of wave (fast, tall, tubeless, and so on), you often have to change tactic to achieve the same result as previously.

Some of the challenges come in the form of contests, where you are scored mainly on the quality of each type of trick. It's no good being fantastic at air tricks if you can't ride the tube, as your overall average will drop. Pass enough challenges, and you either unlock a new beach, or a new set of goals on an existing beach.

So far so good, but there are flaws. Although I've stressed that the different beaches and waves provide different feels and problems, the fact of the matter is that the game is limited to pulling tricks on a wave. The longevity of Kelly is severely cut as you will tire of the same thing, only slightly different, time and time again. It is fun, but when you're done you'll probably want to move on to something else.

Another problem, and this is probably a more personal one, is with some of the beaches. For the



training level and first of the beaches, the wave 'travels' from right to left. You get used to this, and the first few unlocked beaches are also right to left waves. Then the game throws a left to right wave at you, and it knocks you off-kilter. You almost have to relearn the controls; they're not reversed, but everything else suddenly seems to be.

Don't be put off by the score, as this is a fine game. It just isn't as good as its stable-mate Tony and surfing is just more limiting than skateboarding. Kelly Slater is still worth a purchase, but don't pay full price.

3/5



# Mr Driller: Drill Land

Tim Miller is reminded of a trip to Legoland...

## An open letter to Nintendo Europe:

Dear people,

Namco say that you're responsible for deciding if Mr Driller gets released in Europe. Well, where is it? Mr Driller was a fine arcade game, and its home conversions (on the PS, DC, PC and GBC) remain among the best puzzle games available.

As a "pink blob", you must work your way to the bottom of a pit, drilling through various coloured blocks. When unsupported, the blocks drop down and might crush you - but if four or more are gathered together, they disappear. All the time you're running out of oxygen, so you must collect compressed air cannisters on your way down. It sounds easy, but it's not.

The Gamecube game has a number of modes in addition to the basic one, and even this has had a makeover - the background music is sublime. All the games have the same drilling basis, but with differing objectives, such as collecting statues or freezing ghosts. When each of these is complete, you get a boss battle, and then the games progress

to level 2 - a harder version.

In addition, there are two multiplayer games; a race to the bottom, and a searching game. While neither are masterpieces, they're both good fun.

Graphically and sonically, the game's great. Presentation is exceptional. This is the best puzzle game for a long time, and yet you have no plans to release it in Europe. Please reconsider.

Yours etc,  
ugvm

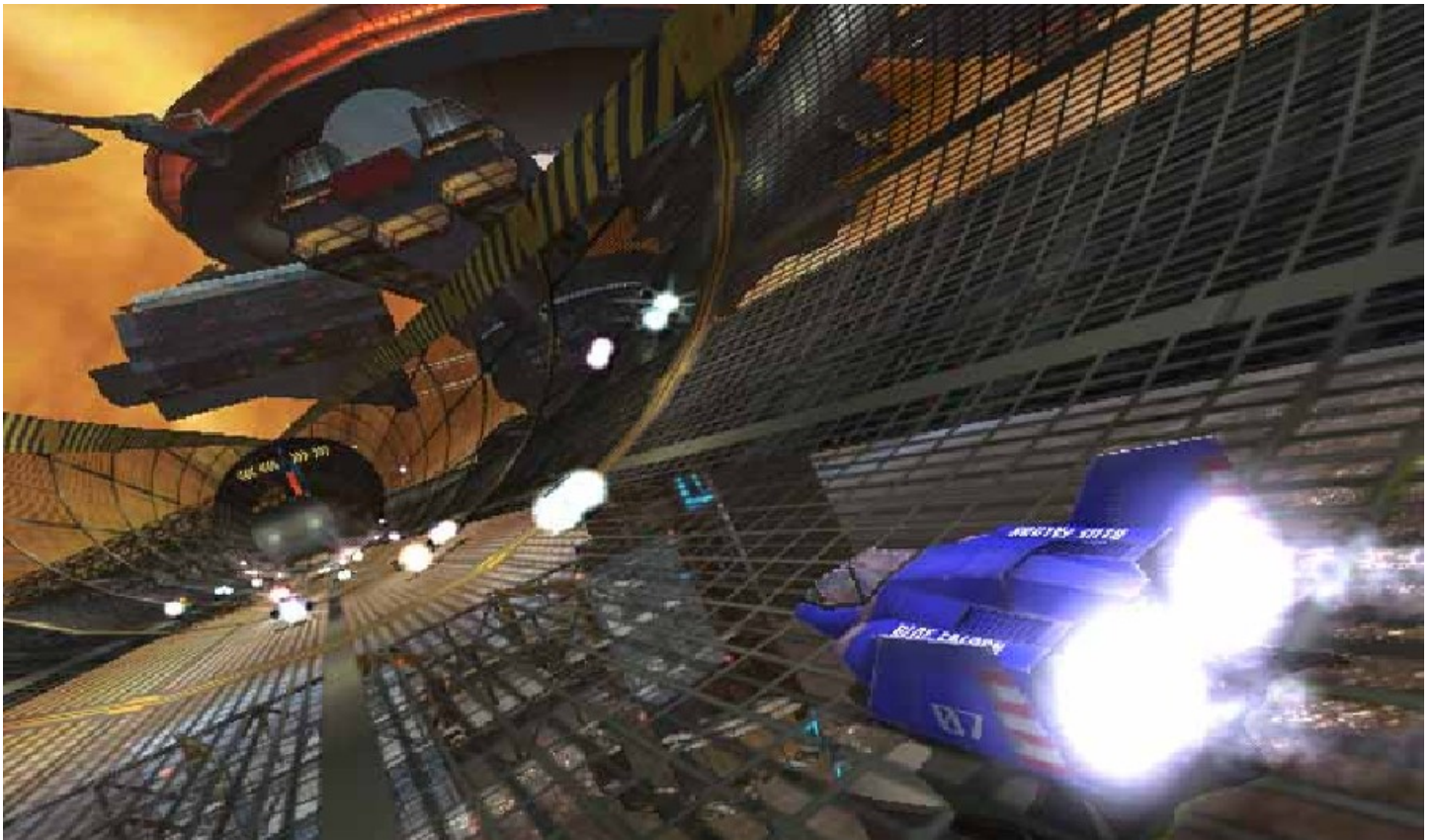
Now, while the above is perfectly true, there are a couple of niggling points. The Japanese game (the only one available) will work with Freeloader, but will not save. Each time you play, you'll have to start from the beginning. Also, as with all puzzlers, the game can become slightly repetitive over long sessions. This is partly alleviated by the variations in the different games, but only partly.

Aside from that, it's marvellous.



4/5





# F-Zero GX

The poignance of this title in videogame history is evident from the very first screen after seeing the boot up Gamecube logo. It's still a little weird seeing the Nintendo logo and the Sega logo on a Startup Screen.

Opinions differ on The Nintendo Franchise. Relying on sequels to sell games is seen as a bad thing (we're looking at you, EA) however Nintendo often does endeavour, in most cases, to expand and develop on their titles. A recent trend has seen Nintendo handing over its franchises to other developers to work on. Metroid was given to Retro Studios, Starfox has been given to Namco, after Rare were allowed to use (read: bastardise) him. F-Zero was given to Amusement Vision (AV) of Sega. A good move by Nintendo, as AV have done them proud.

At first glance it may seem that F-Zero GX is simply F-Zero X (N64) with nice graphics. At a risk of sounding shallow, this is actually quite a big factor in what makes GX better than its predecessor. The N64 version sacrificed pretty graphics to keep a super smooth framerate. This was a wise and necessary decision; with the high framerate came a sense of speed like no other seen in a racing game before it. F-Zero X wouldn't have been the same any other way.

**Cowfields** always had a secret desire to be Captain Falcon. But we never saw Falcon wear a pink dress...

F-Zero GX uses the Gamecube's extra power to add much more detail to the cars and scenery, all with crisp textures. The pretty scenery that speeds past may sound only cosmetic, on the contrary: it adds to the sense of speed and excitement. It really is a beautiful game, the wow factor only increased by the fact that the game runs at a faultless 60 fps. It's quite an achievement.

AV put less effort into designing some areas than others. While some look truly amazing, others are a little uninspired, which is a shame. However overall, the style is way ahead of most games out there. Graphics aside, AV have added new gameplay elements to make this an evolution over its predecessor. The obvious addition is Story Mode, with characters from Captain Falcon to the S&M Gimp that is Black Shadow. Story mode consists of 9 chapters, each accompanied with a challenge that can be described as "Bastard Hard". Upon completing the chapters in normal mode, be prepared to cry upon seeing the requirements for Hard mode, and Very Hard mode.

The FMV cutscenes aren't exactly the stuff of great cinema but for fans of F-Zero it's interesting enough to see all these characters beyond their driver profiles. Despite the difficulty, challenges are by no





means impossible. They just need a bit of determination. It's very refreshing to have a game that has a level of difficulty that is not only challenging but very rewarding as a result - and it is important to note that at no point do the challenges rely on luck.

It's true that you may feel you don't have the time or patience to commit to F-Zero, the difficulty may be off putting if you just wanted something to pick up and play for half an hour every so often. The normal modes are still very achievable, however. Grand Prix mode is like you'd expect, however F-Zero's Grand Prix appeals because of the large number of vehicles (30) racing simultaneously. Bashing other racers off the course can become strategic - it is always better to find rivals to send off of the course, to increase the difference between you and them on the leaderboard.

Unlike games such as Quantum Redshift, F-Zero GX does not force you to concentrate on attack more than driving. Indeed, if using a particularly light craft, it has no hope against bashing the heavier tank-like racers, so you have to concentrate on racing alone.

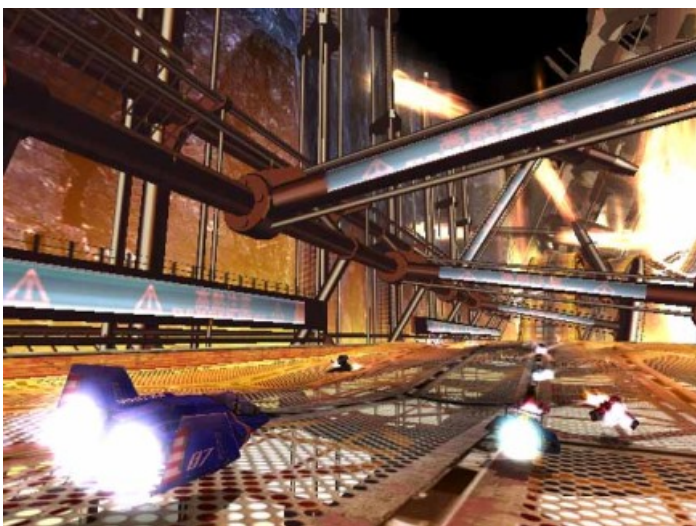
You can build custom racers in F-Zero GX, adding more depth to an already deep game. The system is

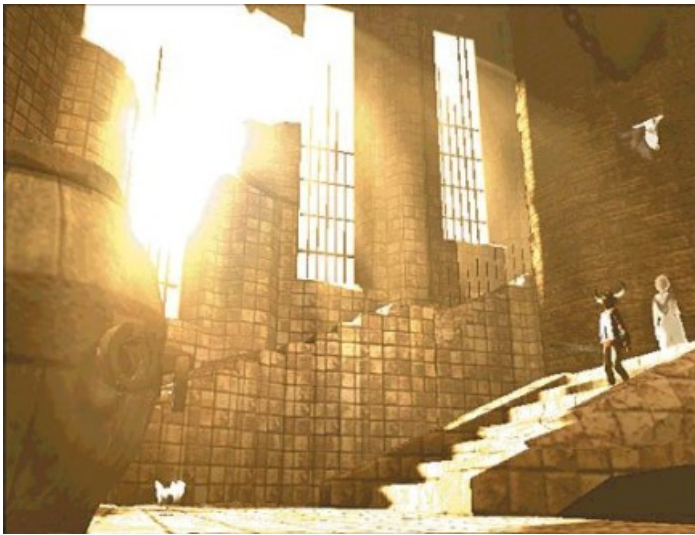
simple, choose a combination of a booster, cockpit and body (and the colour!) to make a huge number of potential combinations, each handling differently. You can also create emblems to stamp on with a very simple paint system. Story and Grand Prix play will help unlock more parts (and the points needed to buy the parts) and one can spend literally hours trying different combinations to create a racer that you like either for its handling, or for the spiffing decoration that you gave it.

F-Zero is worth picking up whether you're a fan of the genre or not. It is true that it has quite a learning curve but it is certainly a game that gives back as much as you put in.

With the huge number of available and hidden elements (totalling over 30 machines, extra tracks and over 50 custom parts) F-Zero GX is a game that has a longevity that few other futuristic racers can claim. You owe it to yourself to give this game a try.

5/5





# Ico

**Stuart Dennett** is feeling a bit horny...

Do you feel bloated? Many gamers do, given the clichés forced down their throats by the increasingly cynical videogames industry. Igniting enemy soldiers assigned to the explosive barrel watch is a routine drill, and setting up a production line of electro-tanks barely sparks a neuron.

No wonder that some appetites are no longer aroused by the gaming equivalent of junk food. Instead, connoisseurs sniff out the gourmet delights on display in highbrow videogaming magazines. Ico is one such delicacy, free of sugary gimmicks. Instead, Ico's solid environment and characters afford it a consistency unlike any game before it.

The character Ico is a cursed boy whose people have cast him out in fear of the horns upon his head. In his castle prison he encounters the princess Yorda, whose language is alien to him. Armed with a staff, Ico must guide the defenseless Yorda to safety while protecting her from capture by dark spirits.

Playing as Ico, you must occasionally separate yourself from Yorda in order to carry out some task. As the spirits could attempt to kidnap Yorda at any



moment, you feel a longing to return to her and feel her reassuring tug on your hand through the vibration of the joypad. If the spirits do capture Yorda, your game is over, and you must reload from the last save point.

The save points provide a good example of how Ico maintains a coherent world. Rather than having to walk into a floppy disk icon to save, Ico and Yorda must rest upon a stone sofa. The illusion of veracity is never broken. Similarly, there are no spinning coins or floating rings to collect, and the onscreen action is not obscured by details of points gained or lives remaining.

Describing the castle as a stunning backdrop to the game doesn't do it justice. Given an appropriate vantage point, it is possible to see vast tracts of the castle receding into the distance, revealing the path already traveled and the road ahead. This isn't just scenery; it's a fully-formed Euclidian world.

Aside from the unique aesthetic and understated characters, Ico doesn't stretch the genre too much. The less imaginative puzzles that Ico and Yorda encounter involve pushing crates and pulling levers. Well-fed gamers might be forgiven for letting out a burp.

And then in less than ten hours, you've cleared your plate. Ico provides a few extra morsels for those who demand seconds, though you've already devoured the puzzles making up the meat of the game. Those with the capacity to appreciate games as an art form will forgive Ico its few faults and allow it to settle in videogaming history. I'm not confident that mainstream consumers will be so discerning – there's no accounting for taste.

**5/5**







# Jet Force Gemini

**Jim Taylor** spends some quality time with some young twins. And their dog. Ahem.

"What?" I hear you cry. This is Jet Force Gemini, an oft-overlooked title for the N64. The first self-published Rare game came out in October 1999 and was Rare's first release since Banjo-Kazooie some 18 months previous. It's probably most infamous for the original character design featuring two young children, until Rare were forced to revise the characters to something slightly older after fears were voiced by Nintendo over the violence being wrought by such young characters.

JFG is a slightly odd game to categorise. In essence it's a first person shooter viewed from a third person perspective with platforming in it to boot. Your quest is to defeat the evil tyrant Mizar and his army of ant-like bugs and rescue the furry teddy-bear like Tribals as you go. Featuring large levels of blood spillage and decapitation yet containing cute characters, many are unsure what to make of it, hence the fact it's not one of Rare's best-known games.



The main feature of JFG is the fact that all three characters in the game (Juno, Vela and their canine companion Lupus) have their own journey to make to Mizar's palace, clearing planets of bugs along the way. Eventually they all meet up and that's when it gets interesting. Most levels require you to clear set areas of enemies before allowing you to proceed, although this is slightly restrictive it's not something you really notice whilst playing through due to the adrenalin of shooting enemies' heads off. There are also a number of other diversions to be found; collecting pieces of Floyd, a robotic hovering helper; playing various minigames as Floyd and finding new and exciting weapons.

Anyway, once you've reached the palace, and having fought Mizar (only to have him run away), each character receives a cool jet-pack upgrade and are informed that they'll need to retrieve all the lost pieces of a spacecraft to chase Mizar to his secret asteroid lair. To enable you to do this the previous levels are unlocked for all the characters allowing you to open up all manner of bonuses and secret levels as you save all the Tribals who will reward you with the missing pieces of ship.

JFG is also notable for its enemy AI; although not in the same league as Halo et al it's still quite impressive when the enemies run away from hurled grenades. Some will even surrender when you face them with your machine gun one on one. Which leads us on to the weapons: as with most shoot-em-ups you have a wide variety of weapons to choose from. However you actually need to find them all for each character so although Vela may have the homing missile launcher she may be without the sniper rifle, whereas Juno has both. Each weapon will be of some use throughout

## Review

the different levels but you'll probably find yourself sticking with the pistol and machine gun for the bulk of the game, occasionally switching to another gun for a boss fight or particularly tricky section. Whilst speaking of weapons it's worth noting again the liberal amounts of gore generated by your three-person rampage over the planets, with blood spurting from dead enemies and decapitated heads flying off.

A mention must also go to the music, some of the levels feature some fantastic orchestral tunes, worthy testament to Rare's sound department.

Although JFG starts off fairly simple the difficulty soon ramps up, unfortunately past the point of frustration on some levels. However when you do finally overcome that tricky section the sense of achievement is palpable. And continuing with the difficulty we find the bosses. While the first one or two are relatively easy to defeat the third causes quite a few problems for most. And as for the last boss...let's just say that after owning the game for over five years I've still not defeated him.

On the whole Jet Force Gemini is a good game and definitely a big challenge however it's somewhat an



acquired taste which isn't aided by the sometimes frustrating difficulty.

4/5



## Review

GBA

# Hot Wheels World Race

deKay considers a career change.

It isn't all fun in the jet setting lifestyle of a ugvm reviewer, you know. Sometimes we have to endure the worst pain, just to entertain you. Take Hot Wheels World Race for instance. No really – take it. Keep it. I don't want it.

Imagine F-Zero, robbed of all its speed. Add a dash of Mario Kart: Super Circuit, without the excellent weapons. Then strip out any remaining smoothness, gameplay and originality, and add a dash of stupidity and annoyance. What have you got? Probably the worst racing game ever. Even worse than Atari Karts.

The problems are immediately obvious. The handling of your vehicles is pants, causing cornering difficulties and too much over and under-steering. The framerate lurches all over the place, and the number of cars on the track have no bearing on it. The tracks are dull, and all have far too many stupid 90 degree turns and hairpins. Graphically, Hot Wheels is awful. It looks worse than early GBA



games, and in the days of Sega Rally and Crazy Taxi on the console, this is unacceptable. Konami Krazy Racers kicks sand in the face of Hot Wheels, despite being both three years old, and a poor-man's Mario Kart.

Worse still are the controls. The "kick" with Hot Wheels is the jumps. You can pull off stunts whilst in the air pressing directions. Land perfectly after a trick, and you get a speed bonus. Mess it up, and come to a dead stop. This could be great, if it wasn't for the controls – you cannot start steering left or right just before you land, as you try to trick instead. And crash. This means you have to retrain your brain if you've ever played any other racing game ever. Not only that, but in order to use one of the (crap) power-ups, you have to let go of accelerate and press L.

The game is held together with a storyline so bizarre and stupid that you feel pangs of pain actually reading it, which kind of sums up the whole game really. Do not buy.

1/5





# Advance Wars 2

**Kieron Hyams** is only slightly amused by the dyslexic gamer who went to make a 'donation' at the Sturm Bank...

Stop the press, hold the front page and stick an extra inch on your Christmas list - the best GBA game just got better! The lovely Nell is back and still refusing to give us a good look at those legs of hers!

For those of you who missed the first incarnation of this game (erm ... both of you at the back - pay attention!) this is a turn-based and top-down strategy game, where you must pit your army against the Black Army foe across a series of battlemaps in an attempt to save all of Cosmo Land. All the features that made this such a well-balanced and fun game are still there: a finely-balanced set of troops and vehicles, a sound difficulty curve, an intuitive control system and some lovely cartoon-like graphics (I'm sure the troops are actually bopping with their walkmans just out of view under their helmets!).

There are a number of gameplay modes to be sampled and savoured, including a series of one-off maps in the war room, multiplayer fun (via link cable or using one GBA and passing it around) in the Link and Versus Modes, a Design Room where you can draw your own battle maps, and the Campaign Mode 'main game' which takes you across various countries encountering other Commanding Officers ('COs'), each with their own special skills and weaknesses to learn to use. As well as all the COs from last time there are also some new ones. Some good. Some not very good. Sensei of the yellow army, for example, is a fly-boy of yesteryear who's a dab hand at an air assault. However, the best thing Colin can bring to the fight is a rich daddy. Honestly.

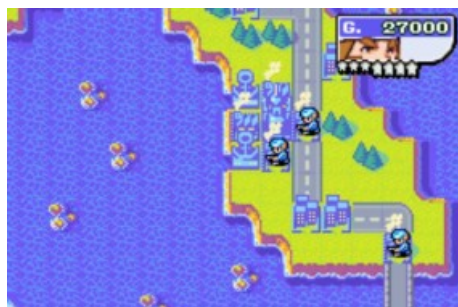
Each map will present you with a task you must complete to achieve victory. This might be as simple as capturing the enemy base or wiping them all out. Or you could have to destroy the enemy laser cannons (yes, I said laser cannons!) or simply stay alive until reinforcements turn up. You need to try and capture cities to earn you extra resources to buy more troops, and to take account of the relative merits and

disadvantages of the various terrain and army unit types. Troops can only move slowly through mountains but they offer excellent defensive cover. Helicopters are a very effective way of taking out troops, but are vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire, which in turn is weak against tanks, which can struggle against helicopters. You can see where I'm going here. It might look cute, but you need to think about what you're doing if you're going to earn a good CO rank, make it to the next map, and unlock some other Commanders to help you out.

Call me controversial - but there's nothing unique or new about Advance Wars. And Advance Wars 2 doesn't mess with the formula. But it is so well put together, so fun to play, and so rewarding to complete that it's a very rain delayed trip home on the train that makes me change my gamepak. And I've been going solid for a good few months. There's even fun to be had at games nights thanks with the multi-player modes.

There are some good updates here - the careful placement of missile silos towards the centre of some maps provides a good incentive to go all out hell for leather to get to them first rather than the more conservative approach that would have conquered in the first Advance Wars. Supply pipes now block your way and need to be severed to prevent the enemy factory producing hundreds of troops. 'Neo Tanks' offer the ultimate direct combat weapon, even if they do look a bit like the love-child of a space hopper and a supermarket trolley. And then there's a frikkin' HUGE deathray that I really wish I could get my hands on.

If you have the first Advance Wars, you'll be a little disappointed at the number of the previous maps that have been recycled within the War Room. But the new Campaign is excellent. If you weren't bowled over last time round, there may not be enough to justify buying this one. But Advance Wars 2 really should be in everyone's collection for those long journeys and those nights when you don't really need to get to bed, I mean it's only a meeting with the Boss about that promotion, and you're sure that if you can just outflank those troops...



5/5





# Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

Not even the Force could help **Monkey** come up with an amusing tagline...

A long time ago on a computer platform far, far away... there was a game called "X-Wing", which was one of the major reasons I upgraded my PC solely for games. One of the reasons that made this game so great, and makes anyone who remembers it do so fondly and with great affection, is that it's an almost perfect marriage between the Star Wars films and great game play design. Not only were the graphics outstanding for its time, but the story, situations, and musical score fitted seamlessly with the Star Wars mythology. Needless to say, Star Wars fans were beside themselves. Fast forward a few years later, and with the noticeable exceptions of *Rogue Leader*, a couple of platformers on the SNES, and a few FPS on the PC, there hasn't been much of interest for true fans of the films; in fact, it's been painful to watch.

So now, in 2003, comes a new pretender for the throne "Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic"; has this game got The Force, or is it just Jar-Jar? Well, for starters, it's an RPG, and the Star Wars universe has practically got "RPG" written all over it - it seems perfect doesn't it? Well, here's the catch: KOTOR isn't based on either the original trilogy, or indeed the new

prequels, but the universe you'll find yourself in predates the Star Wars you know and love by around 4000 years. This might seem like a long time to you and me but there's plenty to recognise in this Star Wars universe, however don't expect to suddenly run into Darth Vader and a couple of storm troopers.

It's difficult to review this game without giving much, or most of the plot away, and the pleasure in playing this game comes from the unfolding story and the choices you make to influence the outcome of the story which follows. This mainly depends on how you complete certain story critical tasks and this, in turn, determines whether you follow the light side of the force, or if you prefer to turn to the dark side. For example, you need to retrieve item "A" for person "B" from person "C", if you fancy yourself as a bit of Luke Skywalker you might want to negotiate with person "C" (usually as a sub-task) to get item "A" and give to person "B", this will earn you light side points, however, if you want a bit of Vader respect you might want to steal item "A" by killing person "C", and eventually sell it onto person "B" shortly before killing them too. It might sound a bit extreme, but you really



can be a complete bastard in this game, and this in turn will effect what type of "powers" you'll get in the battle portion of the game: turn to the light side and you'll be able to heal your colleagues and push your enemies away, choose the dark side and electricity and choking become your new best friends. Part of the pleasure in this game comes from making these choices and designing your characters to suit your playing style. There are plenty of characters you can join up with and customise, some of the people you'll meet and eventually control are better realised than others. The more you use these characters in battle the more you'll get to know them better through a variety of cut-scenes and dialogue. This never really gets as boring as you might think and it does help the main story which drives the RPG forward. There is a twist in the story, and there are several clues early on as to what it might be, this won't really change your choices in-game, but it does keep you interested in the bigger picture.

You won't get very far in the game unless you familiarise yourself with the battle system straight away. Fortunately the game leads you into it gently. The combat is turn based, although at first you might be mistaken for thinking it was real time. Until you gain force powers and light sabers you spend a lot of time messing around with guns and swords, which aren't very interesting, to be honest. The combat system basically allows you to queue attack commands for up to three characters, it takes time to



get used to this system, especially as the action will start and stop at a moments notice as the "turn" is over, but it's worth investing time into learning the eccentricities of the style of fighting because the game won't pull any punches later on in the game. Expect lots of loading and saving later on as the enemies adapt to more selective fighting styles (and believe me, you will curse the loading times of this game at least once).

Ultimately, the combat system is different, yet rewarding: the graphics aren't that great in battle, and you will get to a point in this game where you easily overpower your adversaries, so you'll find some of the later battles tiresome. And here comes the first really big disappointment; late on in the





story, instead of trying to provide you with any kind of real challenge, the game will just throw wave after wave of the same generic enemy at you. I'm sure at one point I must have spent at least half an hour taking down a constant stream of Dark Jedi and Sith Troopers, and I can assure you this sounds more exciting than it really is.

The combat system is extremely configurable, and I tended to favour light sabres in battle, not least because they look and sound the business. Unfortunately you never really get to "build" your own light saber in this game, at least not in any real sense; you can customise it so it will gain you extra abilities and immunities, but besides this don't expect to produce a killer weapon over the course of the game, although it's a nice touch that you can assign a light saber to each hand in battle.

Finally, the exploration section of the game is functional, but not exceptional - don't expect to stray far from where the game wants you to go. It's possible to visit every area on each planet extremely quickly, notably, the "outside" locations on the Wookiee home world are so laughable it really isn't funny. The only saving grace is "Tatooine", but again this disappoints once too often, and there's a tendency to complete each stage of the story just so you can see something new.

There are plenty of sub-games to keep you interested if you tire of the main story, but these are easily mastered quickly and are unforgivingly easy.

So, is this just another bad Star Wars game? No, not by a long shot, it's easily an above average game and worth the recommended retail price alone. In fact I'd say this was an essential Xbox purchase if you had even a passing aversion to RPGs. I completed the game in a little under 35 hours, and I feel I need to complete it as a Dark Jedi just for completions sake, so 70+hours for a single game is extremely good mileage, but I feel that had this game been set in the time frame of the original trilogy then I would have enjoyed the total experience a lot more; it feels like Star Wars - but not quite.

Ultimately, if you can enjoy this game for what it is, and not for what it could be, then you will enjoy it far more than I did, but for me this game feels little more than an well produced cash-in based on a great series of movies.

4/5

**ugvm**

**Silver Award**







# Wario Ware, Inc

**John Houston** never did have a very long attention span...

The Wario Ware, Inc instruction manual is full of colourful pictures, and even some fun stickers, but is slightly lacking in the usual features such as controls. With games like Conflict: Desert Storm this might be a problem, but not here.

The main game is story based and follows the coders of Wario's new games empire and the mini-games they create. Each mini-game lasts 5 seconds and the only control information is a helpful one or two words that flash on the screen just before you're thrown head first into the action. Comments like "Pound" usually imply a tap of the A button at the right moment while "Dodge" may mean a few taps of the D-Pad.

It can be a little hard at first working out what you need to do on each mini-game and when to do it, at times to the point of frustration, but with only one or two actions per mini-game they're soon remembered and progression can be quite fast. More so for the fact that the speed of the games slowly increases the more you complete. While the counter always starts at 5 the "seconds" are soon shortened so button pressing becomes frantic.

For each coder's level you begin with 4 lives and must complete a certain number of levels and the special boss stage to unlock the next character and, in many cases, an additional one or two player game (two player games being played on a single Game Boy). You lose

a life each time you fail to correctly complete a mini-game.

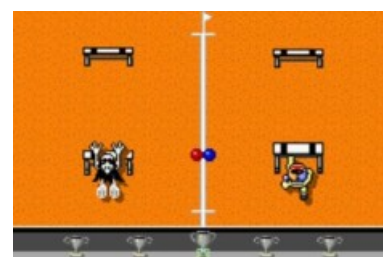
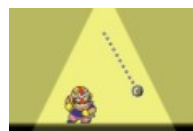
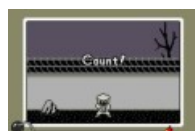
For those really tricky games practise makes perfect, and the Grid mode provides the required practise (as well as instructions for how to play the mini-game - okay, it was a lie earlier, but these are really cheating in the same way as getting last year's exam paper in a mock GCSE). Each game has 3 levels of difficulty which you play through in succession, with the speed increasing after each trio. Get the required score and you'll get a flower for that game. Get all the flowers in the grid to unlock a special game.

The mini-games themselves vary from a version of Duck Hunt to a hotdog munching Wario. Each is simple in concept (and sometimes design) but is extremely addictive. Scores, especially in the grid, are set at just the right point that you need a few plays to complete any one character or game but not so many that you may end up with a slightly damaged Game Boy.

In all Wario Ware, inc is an excellent game (so much so that I bought a copy and I don't even own a Game Boy) that should keep any gamer (and a few non-gamers) amused for hours.

5/5

ugvm  
Gold Award



# Naruto: Narutimate Hero

No, we haven't a clue what **Paul Tomlin** is on about either...

Naruto is a popular Japanese boys comic. Like most popular Japanese boys comics, it revolves largely around a bunch of people who have nothing better to do than stand around for hours going into great depth about exactly how they are going to beat their opponent to death, and what no doubt heartbreaking circumstance has lead them to fight. Then they spend about thirty seconds killing each other, or arriving at a stalemate which requires another lengthy discussion.

Unsurprisingly, the first Naruto PS2 game is a fighter, the closest comparison to which would be Nintendo's Smash Bros series, stripped of its four player fun and ring out-style fighting. The fights in Naruto take place in fairly large, somewhat interactive arenas within which the player is given freedom of movement, including such fun tricks as walking on water or walls. Whilst the movement is strictly on a two-dimensional basis, each stage has a front and a back plane which can be jumped between to put some distance between yourself and your foe.

The actual fighting is pretty straightforward. The game only has one standard attack button which can be used to pull off a range of standard attacks as well as some character specific combos in conjunction with the usual d-pad manipulations. There is also a ranged attack button, which will utilise either your infinite supply of a basic throwing weapon or one of the disposable items collected from the stage. You have also have a Chakra gauge, which among other things is used to trigger the characters super techniques. These lavishly animated attacks pit



opponents together in a race to complete a sequence of button presses. If the attacking player completes his sequence, they can expect to inflict big damage, and if he completes it first then they'll also get the opportunity to try the next section of the attack (of which there are typically 2 to 4). Basically, it's up to the defender to try and beat the attacker, else their health gauge will be missing a huge chunk. These attacks are hard enough to land as not to slow down or unbalance the game, but with a bit of luck and a lot of good timing can completely turn a battle around.

When it comes down to it, Naruto is hardly going to give Sega or Namco sleepless nights, but what it does do is provide a fast, fun and unusual fighter with a shallow learning curve which belittles its complexity. It looks good, with a nice cel-shading engine which gives the characters' shadowed areas a rough, comic-book look. Aside for the usual story, practice and two player modes you would expect from this kind of game, there is also a large selection of unlockable artwork and the like which can be obtained by feeding the points earned in the one player modes in capsule toy machines (not unlike Smash Bros. Melee). There is also a comprehensive mission mode, whose objectives eventually get so ludicrously difficult you'll





be pulling your hair out (assuming you've put down the FAQ you were using to figure out the objectives first).

Ultimately there are only have two real problems with the game. Firstly, the sound is pretty unspectacular. The music doesn't really stand out, and whilst there is large amounts of voice work the encode quality of that used in battle is seem relatively low outside the super techniques. The second issue with the game is the selection of characters - only twelve, six of which have to be unlocked in Story mode before you can play as them. Whilst its true that you at least don't get any of the identical, bar the costume, characters you get in a lot of these games, it still seems rather tight

of them given the wealth of characters in the source material. Lack of Japanese knowledge is only really a problem if you are insane enough to venture into the mission mode, and objectives for this can be found easily enough if you look around the net.

To conclude, *Naruto - Narutimate Hero* is a surprisingly entertaining fighter which can be enjoyed whether you know the source material or not.

4/5



GC

Review

# Atsumare! Made in Wario

It isn't just his games of *Made in Wario* that last five seconds, **Tim Miller's** girlfriend tells us.

Wario Ware is one of the freshest games to be released for a long time, as our review this issue explains. Nintendo knows when they're on to a good thing, and they've now released a Gamecube followup (in Japan, at least) to capitalise on the first game's success.

This game isn't really a sequel, however. All the minigames from the GBA game are here, and the difference is in the focus of the game - this is a multiplayer game at heart, with differing modes meaning you play the minigames in a different format. One mode sees your characters dancing on separate stages, and a spotlight highlights one person at a time, who then must play a minigame (lose three and you're out). Another mode allows other players to move their character all over the screen, in an attempt to prevent the character playing from seeing. Another mode is the reverse of this, with players each highlighting an area of the screen with a spotlight to try and enable the character playing to see. And so on, until a personal highlight - a mode where every time you lose a game, or another person wins one, you add another turtle to



your pile and must balance on this tower for five seconds at a time. The latter is one of the few areas in which there are new gameplay experiences - in addition to the turtle-balancing, the right to play the minigame is earned through victory in all-new four-player games.

Games are unlocked as you play through - and in a good move, the single-player games are unlocked through playing single-player, and the multi-player games are unlocked while you're playing with others. Although daunting at first, the fact that the game's in Japanese hardly hinders navigating the menus at all.

The Japanese-ness of the game has a larger effect during play, but not to a massive extent. There are one or two minigames which are all-but-unplayable (the most obvious being the multiple-choice question), but otherwise the only effect is that the short instructions are unreadable; however, those describing which letter or number to press are still understandable.

The multiplayer aspect of the game works so well, it's surprising after playing this that the GBA game was constrained to one player only. Even with the language barrier, this is an essential game, and one that Nintendo Europe should be releasing as soon as they can. Preferably, as in Japan, at a budget price.



5/5





# Super Monkey Ball 2

**OJLim** has a monkey, and he can go anywhere, yes he has a monkey, and he can go anywhere\*...

Super Monkey Ball was an important milestone in Sega's history. Not only was it the first Sega game to appear on a Nintendo console, it also was one of the Gamecube's launch titles. Two years later, and it still is one of the best Gamecube games with its potent mix of tricky single-player stealth levels and genius multiplayer party games.

Inevitably, Amusement Vision capitalized on Super Monkey Ball's popularity by creating a sequel. Super Monkey Ball 2 has the dubious honour of being the most misunderstood gaming sequel of all time. From complaints that the single-player level design was impossible to claims that the party games had been ruined, Super Monkey Ball 2 managed to upset a lot of people and please few.

It is time for a reappraisal for this much maligned monkey. While not reaching the dizzying heights and stupendous wonder of its predecessor (and unable to recreate that feeling of joy from playing with a monkey in a ball for the first time) Super Monkey Ball 2 is still a very good game.

Perhaps the most contentious point about Super Monkey Ball 2 is the single player mode. Amusement Vision obviously realised there was only so many times they could recreate Expert 7 from the first game and decided to throw a few spanners into the works. Hence, the introduction of switches, pushing devices moving floors and various items that can fall on your monkey from above. Rather than simply adding new nuances to the gameplay, these additions actually make Super Monkey Ball 2 a

completely different game. While the first game was mainly based on how stealthy you were using the analogue controller, the sequel is more puzzle-based, with most levels having a certain method in which to solve it. For example, a level amusingly entitled Totalitarianism involves your Monkey trying to avoid falling disks. The level appears completely random to complete, until one realizes that the various bananas littered around the level are safety zones. Suddenly, it is not such a random experience.

Admittedly, there are a couple of levels which could have been left on the cutting room floor (the absolutely terrible Switch Inferno, which actually *is* completely random and Launchers, which isn't, but is so frustrating it might as well be) but overall the single-player mode is an enjoyable game if one does not expect it to play like its predecessor.

And the party games. The six new additions are all throwaway, save for Monkey Baseball, which probably works so well because it is the least like the sport it says it is. Then there are the tweaked party games brought over from the first game. Monkey Fight is as compelling as it always has been; Golf is the most improved game, and is actually a playable golf game now rather than just miniature golf; Bowling has been tweaked so it is no longer as easy as it was previously and has the addition of a crazy lane mode which will bring limited enjoyment; Monkey Billiards is largely the same with the addition of more game modes.

Probably the most controversial change is Monkey



Target, which was the best part of the party game experience from the first game and of any game. Thankfully, as a party game, it is actually better; simultaneous four-player Monkey Target is pure multiplayer heaven. Take away the rest of the game, and Monkey Target alone would get this game 3/5. However, the sacrifice is that single-player Monkey Target, so immensely playable in Super Monkey Ball, has lost all its charm and cunning. But really, you shouldn't be playing party games by yourself.

So all in all, Super Monkey Ball 2 is a fine game. The various niggles, changes and additions pulls it down from the classic status of its perfectly-formed predecessor. But if you have three friends, these are all inconsequential points. Buy this game and Monkey Target your way into paradise.



## Second Opinion

**Kieron Hyams** sticks his (monkey boat) oar in...

There has been a genuinely attempt to create original levels that offer a new challenge. Some require thought to navigate a maze, others timing to make it through a split-second gap. Both require you to go like the clappers against the clock. Here's a sticking point - amongst all the new level designs, with switches and movement, the levels have become a bit... twisted. A few quite late on in the game are just way too easy, and others are just so hard as to demoralise all but the hardened monkey-baller. Yes, I mean Launchers. I am sure this will invoke the wrath of the editorial team. But whether it's plain luck or honed skill if you can balance a monkey in a ball on a 50-foot matchstick, it's just not fun trying 100-odd times until you can tell the difference. And Anthropod isn't much better.

But please don't get me wrong, it is a lovely game and some of the levels are like art, to be cherished and admired. And this is only one facet of the game. The longevity of the first SMB was derived from the party games, and here SMB2 has doubled its offer. However, this time round it seems to be about quantity over quality, and Monkey Golf has gone from a fun round of crazy golf to take itself far too seriously.

**3/5**

GBA

Review

# Super Monkey Ball Jr.

**Tim Miller** refrains from making any jokes about handheld balls

Monkey Ball, the arcade game, had you controlling a monkey in a ball using a large banana-shaped joystick. Super Monkey Ball on the Gamecube used the Cube's analogue stick to amazing effect. The game needed pixel-perfect control, and it was honed to perfection. On the GBA, you have a digital directional pad - it's not going to work, is it?

Surprisingly, it does. While the first Gamecube game remains one of the best games on any home console (yes, I am saying that Halo's review was too harsh in **ugvm04**), its little brother replicates it better than would be thought possible. No lazy 2D adaptation here - as you can see, levels are reproduced in polygonic glory, and it's amazing what Realism have managed to get the GBA doing. Not only do you have 65 levels to make your way through, but two of the minigames are also here - Monkey Fight and Bowling.

It's not all good news - there's quite a lot of pop-up



on some levels, which can obscure the exit, and the framerate's not as steady as we'd have liked. But it still plays exceptionally well, and is an essential purchase.





# Sonic Pinball Party

Yet another game involving balls for **Tim Miller** to review.

The GBA has hosted a few pinball games now – Pinball of the Dead, Pinball Dreams, Pokémon Pinball Remake – which is odd, since you'd expect the screen's aspect ratio to be a little difficult to work with for something that normally is taller than it is wide. Hmm – I think I've discovered a use for the N-Gage ...

Sonic Pinball Party is the latest silver-ball game to be released, and does everything the name suggests and more. Not only is there a pinball table based on Sonic's games (and with a real ball now, none of the Spinball controllable character rubbish), but Sonic Team's output lends itself to a table based on Nights, and one based on Samba de Amigo. Both Sonic and Nights tables have different designs available as you defeat a "boss" – though these are just different pictures rather than table layouts. The Samba table (although not initially available, it's unlocked very quickly) not only has a table based on bananas and mambo music, but also includes a mini version of the proper Samba game – flip your flippers when the balls reach them in time to the music.

Talking of music, this is a particular highlight. As you undertake different tasks on the tables, you may

recognise the music from Sonic's Starlight Zone, Sonic R's Supersonic Racing, the generic Robotnik boss music, or Open Your Heart from the Sonic Adventure title. The Nights table is accompanied by softer music, as found in the Saturn game, and the Samba table allows you to play to a number of Sega songs, including the Chu Chu Rocket theme, Phantasy Star Online, and Burning Hearts (from Burning Rangers).

There are a number of play modes – 'arcade' allows you to play each table to try for a high score; 'story' has you trying to complete specific objectives on a certain table; 'training' explains how to interact with each table – and also included is a chao garden (with two ring-collecting games) and a selection of casino subgames. And it's all fun.

The downside? It's difficult. To even get on the high score table, you must get at least 50,000,000 points, and for the first couple of weeks you'll be lucky to break five million. It's not particularly easy to judge flipping the ball, so getting it to any particular spot is a little inconsistent, and this can at times be a pain. However, as your skills improve and you start to understand the tables better, you'll learn how to earn extra balls and jackpots, and from that point on you won't look back.



4/5



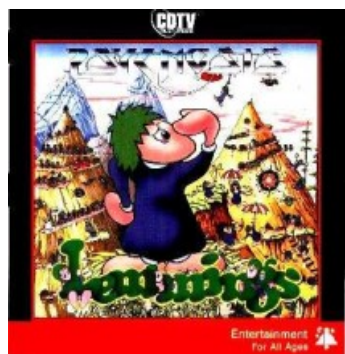


# Going Keyboardless 2

In **ugvm05**, we took a look at some computers that had been butchered into consoles - namely the C64 and the Amstrad CPC. We saw too how they had been complete failures. In this issue, **deKay** shows that companies don't learn from their mistakes...

In March 1991, Commodore debuted the CDTV. A sleek black unit, not unlike a HiFi separate, with a remote control (with built-in console style controller) and a CD-ROM drive. Billed as an entertainment unit, rather than a console, it was designed to fit into your lounge in exactly the way an Amiga wouldn't. Naturally, the CDTV could play games, although Commodore tried to push the "Edutainment" aspect of the machine. Everyone who bought it did so to play Lemmings, however.

Commodore made no secret about the internals of the CDTV. It was an Amiga. More specifically, it was the bastard offspring of an Amiga 500 and an Amiga 3000 - using the OS and CPU of the A500 and the graphics and DMA abilities of the A3000. Oh, and it didn't have a keyboard as standard. You could even buy an external floppy and a keyboard and turn it into an A500, of sorts.



**Lemmings (CDTV)**

When launched, it sold well. Better than the A500, in fact. But then Commodore released the A500 CD-ROM drives, the A500+ and A600 in quick succession afterwards. The CD drive turned an A500 into a CDTV, so A500 owners didn't need to buy the black console. The A500+ and 600 were technically superior to the CDTV, so new buyers went for them instead. And with the announcement of the fully 32-bit, all singing, all dancing A1200, who cared about the CDTV anymore? Answer: Nobody. Commodore cleverly killed it off, seemingly by accident rather than design.

Commodore didn't mind. They'd had a better idea - why not do exactly the same thing again? Create another CDTV, only this time with the innards of the A1200? Excellent decision, Commodore: take an idea that hasn't worked twice, and do it again.

And lo, in 1993, the CD32 was born. This time, it was

a fully realised games console. This time, it was pretty powerful - beating the (at the time) kings, the SNES and the Megadrive. This time, it flopped. Again. Although technically superior to the 16-bit consoles, the only thing that can keep a console selling is games. No matter how good the hardware is, it's useless if there's nothing to play on it.



**Zool (CD32)**

The Jaguar suffered. The 3DO suffered. The C64GS suffered - and now the CD32 would suffer too.

Games "giant" Ocean supported it, but for the most part only with A1200 games burnt to CD, or lazy SNES ports. Other companies released a few games: Codemasters, Sensible Software, Team 17 - but again only with A1200 games. There was very little to warrant buying a CD32 over an A1200 or a SNES. In fact, the CD32 wasn't even that much cheaper than an A1200 (which could do so much more). Commodore released adapters to turn it into a "proper Amiga", like they'd done with the CDTV. Once more, nobody cared. The Megadrive and SNES had a firm footing, and the CD32 flopped.

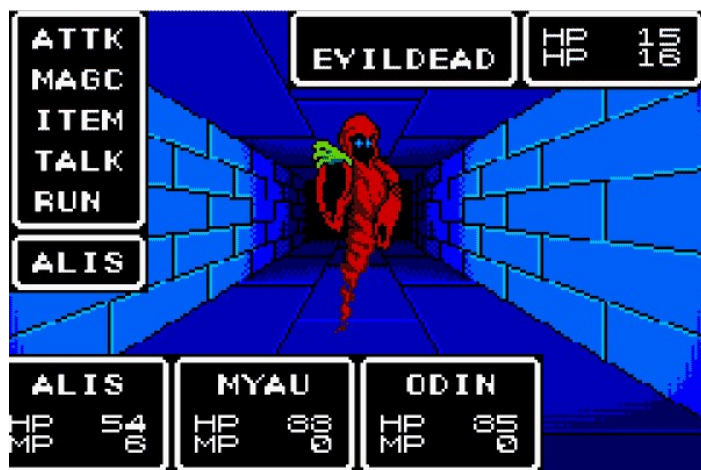
The moral of this story is thus: Do not take the keyboard off a computer, add a CD drive or cartridge slot and try and sell it as a games console. It will flop. Xbox notwithstanding...

## More Information

If you want to find out more on the CDTV, you could do far worse than the CDTV Information Centre at [www.cdtv.org.uk](http://www.cdtv.org.uk)  
For more about the CD32, try:  
[website.lineone.net/~cd32/](http://website.lineone.net/~cd32/)

# Phantasy Star Collection

Under strict instructions not to use the word “phantastic”, **deKay** tries to play three games at once...



Imagine if you could buy three of Sega's best role playing games on one Game Boy cartridge for less than the original cost of any one of them. Thanks to Phantasy Star Collection, you can. Containing the first three Phantasy Star games, there is easily 50 hours play here, more if you've never played them before or want to see everything. Be aware that these are not cut down versions of Phantasy Star Online – these games are ports of the original Megadrive and Master System titles, although little has been altered.

Phantasy Star follows the story of Alis, who is out to avenge the death of her brother, killed at the hands of the good-gone-bad King Lassic. Along the way, her party is joined by Odin (typical hard nut), Noah (typical healer-type) and Myau (erm, a cat). Although the game is pretty standard for an RPG, where you walk around and encounter random battles, it is surprising how well this 15 year old game has stood up. The graphics and sound are nothing special, but then, this is a port of a Master System game. The dungeons and towers take a leaf out of the Book of Early Ultima, with 3D mazes (unlike the later Phantasy Star games). This can make navigation a little confusing, and a Doom-like automap feature would be nice, but thankfully none of the mazes are particularly complicated.

There are problems with this game, however. Firstly, and most unforgivable, is a bug – which, even though present and known in the US version has not been fixed for the UK release. Even a brief mention in the manual would have been nice, but no. The bug comes about when you save the game.

Approximately one time in 50 (a rough estimate), the game will crash when you save. Thankfully, it won't wipe the save you are overwriting, so you can partly get round the bug by saving often. Less technical problems with the game are partly attributable to its age, and the improvements in games since. Buying items is a chore, since you can only buy one at a time. Items can only be sold in second-hand shops too, and it is not always obvious what items do when you buy them due to a lack of description and a too-short name (most humourously, the “tit swd”). Japlish translation seems to have made some important information difficult to understand too, particularly double negative questions where it isn't obvious as to whether a yes or a no is the correct response.

More impressive is Phantasy Star II. Set 1000 years after the first game, you take on the role of Rolf, an agent for the government. You're sent on a mission to find out where some monsters are coming from, and this simple quest soon spirals into a battle with evil. Again. Your party is joined by the usual RPG stereotypes, from hunters to healers. Shir the thief stands out in particular, for being both useful and annoying. She can half-inch items from shops for you (although you have no control over her doing so), including the expensive and powerful stuff. Unfortunately, she has a tendency to nick something useless, and each time she takes something, she returns to your house. Not good when you're on a different planet and have to travel all the way home just to retrieve her!

Many of the problems with the first games have been overcome, including better translation, more obvious





items, and the ability to pick characters for your party from a larger 'pool' of people. This adds a bit of extra strategy to the proceedings: should you take your healers in to keep you alive, or your heavy weapon experts for a quick kill? Thankfully, the save bug isn't apparent with PS2 (or 3), which is just as well since you can now only save in Data Save Shops in towns, whereas with the first game you could save anywhere.

Phantasy Star III is a bit of a deviation from the series, as it is not set in the Algol Star System like the rest, and some PS purists don't class it as a true Phantasy Star game. Don't let this put you off, as it is still a great game, and by far the largest of the three. You start off as Rhys, who is about to marry a girl who washed up on the beach months previously. She is snatched at the ceremony, and you set out to find her. Once you do, however, it doesn't end there. You're given the choice of marrying her again, or marrying someone else you met on your travels. Who you choose decides the next part of the story, as a different wife means a different child and a different 'next chapter' in the game. With three generations to control, there are four possible endings, increasing the replay factor somewhat. To complete each permutation fully will take you easily 80 hours, and each possible chapter is a must to play through, as they all add to the overall story.

Again, there are obvious improvements to PS3 over



PS2, with a better combat system (you are given control over which foe to attack for starters), and a great story, which twists and turns all over the place. The music in PS3 is particularly impressive, especially the haunting theme tune.

So, is it worth buying? Although aging now, and missing Phantasy Star IV (although this is rumoured to be a separate GBA release), these games still have the original magic. Look beyond the slightly drab graphics (which are not a patch on Golden Sun), and forget some of the quirks, and you have an absolute bargain package. Any RPG fan needs to own this collection, and unless you're an ardent hater of random battles, this should appeal to casual RPG gamers too. You're certainly buying a piece of Sega history, and from play-hours alone you're guaranteed your money's worth.

4/5



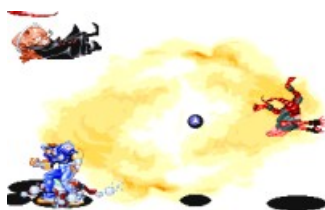
## Arcade

## Retro Review

# Battle Circuit

Monkey revisits a forgotten Capcom classic

So, you've completed Viewtiful Joe, and defeated evil forevermore? What now? Well, how about Battle Circuit? This little gem of a game is one of the craziest, most polished, and enjoyable side scrolling beat-em ups in Capcom's illustrious career. Boasting insane combos and impressive full-on visuals, this is a hidden masterpiece. The basic story involves a mad criminal mastermind, intent on global domination and destruction. You, the player, must choose from an crazed bunch of super-hero misfits to destroy and general kick the living daylight out of everyone



between you and the final boss. The gameplay is suitably hectic, even more so when you consider that four people can join in at any time to contribute to the on-screen carnage. Words really cannot convey the pure visceral fun you'll get out of this game, to play it is to love it.

If you ever get the chance to experience the pure mad mechanics of this game, then give it a whirl, and find out what Capcom were up to before Joe was even born.

5/5



# ECTS and ugvm

In late August, the European Computer Trade Show was held in London. **ugvm**, in the form of **Tim Miller**, **John Houston** and **Kieron Hyams**, was there.

We arrived early, to see around a hundred people milling around the doors. While we waited, we were able to see Nintendo's giant screen showing footage of Mario Kart: Double Dash!!, since their display at ECTS took the form of a large lorry parked outside. But more about that later; shortly before the doors opened, we turned to find that a huge queue had formed behind us. **ugvm** is a trendsetter, indeed.

As we entered into the ECTS hall, the immediate thought was that music games were this year's big thing. Directly ahead was Konami's stand, showing off the latest branch-off of their Bemani range, Karaoke Stage (titled Karaoke Revolution elsewhere in the world, to coincide with the Dance Dance Revolution brand). Dance UK, for Big Ben, had one of the more extravagant stalls, with two of their 8-way dance mats set up on a podium and a competition running all day. The games industry has finally found something that gets girls interested, and it's latching on to it.

Other big companies near the entrance were Valve, showing their Half Life 2 film behind closed doors (nothing there that hadn't been available for download over the Internet for a while), Intel, and EA. If EA's trying to lose their casual gaming image, their stand at ECTS was doing them no favours – scores of PS2s displaying the latest updates of their franchises (FIFA, Medal of Hono(u)r, and so on), with one or two Xboxes displaying graphically-enhanced versions of the same. The main 'new' license, Harry Potter's Quidditch World Cup, was theoretically demoed on the two Gamecubes at the rear of their area, but these were without power.

Of the big stands, Ubisoft's was perhaps the most impressive, with nearly-finished versions of Prince of Persia: the Sands of Time, XIII, and Beyond Good and Evil. The French company's lineup this Christmas is very impressive indeed, and it was good to see European games receiving such a warm reception. There was no PS2 bias here, either – all three consoles, plus the PC, were present. The Xbox version of XIII and the Gamecube version of Prince of Persia looked fantastic.

More innovation was evident elsewhere in the show. A bunch of developers from Korea demonstrated a ping-pong game with a twist – you use a proper table-tennis bat, and motion sensors detect how the ball is hit. While the technology is undoubtedly clever, the two-player game takes up as much room as a real table-tennis table, and you've got to wonder what the developers were thinking ...

You've also got to wonder what the N-Gage's designers were thinking. The hardware was actually much more impressive than expected, with relatively high framerates and graphical detail evident on the games we played. However, the screen aspect seriously limits games, with Tomb Raider all but unplayable without the ability to see either side of Lara. If Nokia can develop some original games which use the screen intelligently, it may be worth looking into – but not until then. It's certainly not 100% crap.

A number of companies had closed booths – Sega, Codemasters and Eidos all operated on a "by appointment only" system, although all had information packs available (not that these contained any new information). ECTS seems

to be returning to a show where publishers, distributors and developers do business – this was highlighted by the lack of under-eighteens on the show floor. The floor was far from full, in fact – there weren't even enough exhibitors to fill Earl's Court. Most of the exhibitors were displaying their exciting joystick range, but there were other new games to be found.

The show floor wasn't the only place to go, however. Nintendo had set up a large area outside the front door, with a lorry trailer housing a large number of Gamecubes and Game Boy Players showing off recent and soon-to-be-released games, including Pacman Versus – Kieron's most anticipated game was, of course, the only one not working. Ironically, there were more Sega games on display in the Nintendo bus than there were around the Sega stand inside the show, with Sonic Heroes being the best available (even though it was hidden around the back of the lorry). **ugvm** took first place on Mario Kart: DD – well, first and third (placings which were repeated when it came out at retail). Congratulations John. Congratulations to **ugvm**, in fact, for managing to appear in ECTS photos in GamesTM and Nintendo Official Magazine. The people standing outside watching Mario Kart – that's us.





# Going Live!

Microsoft have really pushed Xbox Live, with big launch events, free games for signing up (and getting your friends to sign up) and some big Live-exclusive titles. But what is it? **deKay** gives the lowdown...

Xbox Live is Microsoft's Xbox online service, offering three main features: online gaming, downloadable content for your games (such as extra levels that are stored on the Xbox hard drive), and global high score tables. Already built into your Xbox console (unlike the Gamecube and older PS2s) is an Ethernet (RJ45) socket. By simply hooking this up to your broadband internet connection (see Live Wire), assuming you have a broadband internet connection of course, you can take advantage of Live.

Well, not quite. Firstly, you have to buy an Xbox Live starter kit. This pack will currently set you back about £40 (although the price has just risen in the US, so expect a rise here soon too), and contains almost all you need to access the Live service (see What's In The Box) including your first year's subscription fees. Almost everything anyway – you still need an Xbox, and a broadband connection such as cable or ADSL. If you can't get either of these in your area, then you may find that dual channel ISDN (128k) will be enough, although there are reported problems with hosting certain games. Satellite services are right out, however, as the lag times can be huge.

As long as the games you play support it, you can have a Friends List to tell you which of your mates are online, and even what they're playing. You can also voice chat with the people you are playing with, using the supplied headset (see Live Talkin').

Signing up with Live gives you something else too – a Gamertag. This is an online alias you create for yourself, unique to you. Chances are that the one you want is already gone, though, but Microsoft will suggest several randomly generated "hilarious" pseudonyms for you to ignore, should you so wish.

If you don't fancy paying out for a full 12 month subscription, or for the Live Starter Kit, Microsoft have now bundled two months free Live play with certain Live titles. OK, so you don't get the headset, or permanent Gamertag, but it's a great way of seeing if online gaming the Xbox Live way is your cup of tea.



## XSN

XSN, or perhaps more fully, XSNSports is an online Xbox Live extension for organising tournaments in XSN-aware Live games. Currently, these games include Links 2004, Top Spin, Amped 2 and NFL Fever 2004.

Basically, you log into the XSN website at [www.xsnsports.com](http://www.xsnsports.com), and can join an existing competition or create a new one. Competitors arrange times to meet up and play each other, and XSN takes care of recording scores.

Once more games include this feature, it could prove to be a real asset to the Xbox Live service.

# Game On(Line)!

So, what kind of games can you expect to be playing online with Xbox Live?



### MechAssault

Big robots with heavy weapons. Sadly the Live game is boring and slow, just like the one player mode only with less variety. Live does offer loads of downloads in the way of maps, game modes and extra mechs though.



### Midtown Madness 3

Probably one of the most fun online driving games. Plenty of game modes, loads of cars, and even the evolution of IRC - Cruise mode, where you can explore the cities and chat, without all that tedious gameplaying...



### Top Spin

Utilising XSN (see boxout), Top Spin allows not only online tennis play, but also online tournaments. In fact, [uk.games.video.xbox](http://uk.games.video.xbox) has one on right now! The game itself is also very good, almost as good as Virtua Tennis 2.



### Project Gotham Racing 2

PGR was one of best racing games ever made - fast, sleek and original. PGR2 improves on it in almost every way, with more tracks, cars and even better graphics - and Live online play. Probably one of the best games released this year.



### Ghost Recon: Island Thunder

Retailing for around the 20 quid mark this game boasts your standard on-line FPS fare at a low price. The learning curve is incredibly steep if you just wade straight into the on-line portion of the game, expect to be sniped off

as you get to grips with the controls, and don't be surprised if you start hurling abuse at the TV in anger. If however, you decide to persevere and manage to find a few kindred spirits in the game, then this can make a great experience. Various game modes are available, such as Solo, Team, and Co-operative, although you'll find that Solo is the most popular, the other modes are only really enjoyable if you've got some sort of idea who you're playing against.

## Live Talkin'

Microsoft decided, as standard, to include voice communication facilities with the Xbox Live service. Provided your game supports it, you no longer have to resort to typing messages on a keyboard, or pressing a pre-programmed button to produce a pre-configured sentence. Best of all, you don't need to stop playing in order to talk.

With the Starter Kit, you get a (sadly, rather flimsy) headset and an adapter to plug it into your controller. There is a mute button, to stop everyone from hearing you, and a volume control to save your eardrums when another player yells at you. Most games also allow voice masking, where your voice is digitally altered to sound like a cartoon character, a mouse, or a robot (amongst other things). Although it was probably included to increase player anonymity, some of the masks are hugely annoying, or make the player incomprehensible to the point where some game hosts will boot off anyone with a voice mask.

In-game voice chat can give huge advantages to games, especially those that are team-based. Shouting instructions to team-mates really improves co-operation. Being able to verbally put down the opposing team is great too, although slanging matches are not. Be aware too, that voice based comms cannot be censored in the way text-based can be, so expect swearing. And, if one MechAssault session was anything to go by, aural sex between players. Nice.

Most games also allow voice chat in 'lobby' areas, whilst you wait for other players to join or set up. This can be fun, especially if you know people, but again it is often abused by people who just say "Start the damn game already!"

A more serious note about voice chat, which also applies to most other forms of online communication, is that people are not always who they say they are. For our younger readers (such as skidpro) especially, **ugvm** strongly recommends that you NEVER give out any personal information about yourself to anyone you play Live with including your name, where you live, email address and mobile number. Remember kids, MasterChief999 probably isn't 13 and from the same town as you.



## What's in the Box?

The Xbox Starter kit is just that it contains everything (well, except an Xbox and a broadband connection) you need to get up and playing with Xbox Live:

### Starter Disc

As well as providing you with a video hosted by an annoying American who explains what Live is and how to connect it up, the disc also includes three game demos. Mech Assault puts you in command of a giant robot, fighting other giant robots. You're limited to a choice of two mechs, and a restricted set of level maps in the demo. Whacked! is a cartoon fighting game, not unlike

Cel Damage, only without the cars. Again, characters and arenas are cut-down in number compared to the full game. Finally, Moto GP is an excellent Superbikes racer, with three tracks from the full version. You can still race on the other tracks, but only as a 'ghost'.

### Live Headset

Now you too can live out your dream of being a call centre worker with this stylish headset. It plugs into your controller, so you don't need another lead coming from the console to trip up your mum whilst she vacuums around you. Unfortunately, the headset is very

flimsy and prone to being snapped. Microsoft will replace it for you free of charge, however, but only once. Luckily, Nokia hands-free kits seem to work just as well.

### Serial Number

Without this, you can't sign up. It's also worth bearing in mind that even though you've paid your first year's subscription, you still need your credit card. It won't be charged unless you download some non-free content, or you sign up for a second year once your first year runs out.

### Manual

Tch. Real men don't need manuals.

## Live Wire

ISDN aside, there are three main ways you can connect your Live enabled Xbox up to your broadband line. The specifics will differ depending on your provider and connection hardware, but the principles are the same.

### Internet Connection Sharing

If you currently have just one PC directly connected to a broadband modem (perhaps one of them frog things), chances are your modem is plugged into a USB port. If this is the case, you'll need a network card in your PC too – a cheap network card will do, so long as it has an RJ45 socket (a bit like the socket on a standard 56k modem, only bigger) on it. You'll also need to be running an operating system that supports Internet Connection Sharing (ICS), which is basically Windows 98SE, ME, 2000 or XP. Of course, Mac and Linux users have ICS equivalents too. Install the network card in your machine, and enable ICS.

All you need to do now is connect your Xbox's RJ45 port to your PC's RJ45 port. A direct connection like this requires a Cat5 crossover cable. Switch on your Xbox, put the Starter Disc in, and off you go.

### Direct Connection

If your broadband modem is connected to your PC via an RJ45 link, or it has both USB and RJ45 connectors, then you can plug your Xbox directly

into it. The Cat5 cable you require will probably be a standard 'straight through' cable, but some modems may need a crossover cable instead. Check the modem's manual.

There is a problem that you may come across, however. Your ISP may keep a record of the MAC (no, not Mac) address of the device that you connect to them with. The MAC address is a set of hexadecimal numbers that is unique to each networking device – your network card, modem, Xbox, etc. all have one. If your ISP has a record of the MAC address you usually connect with, they may only allow you to connect to them from that address. Luckily, your Xbox's MAC address can be re-written to match that which you normally use. In effect, the Xbox pretends to be your PC so as to fool your ISP that you're using the same device. Read the Live manual for how to do this.

### Router Connection

This is by far the simplest method of joining your Xbox up. If you have a router, generally all you need to do is plug your Xbox into it with a straight through Cat5 cable. If your router has a built-in firewall, you may need to open up certain ports to allow two way communication on certain ports for the Xbox, but unless you want to host games this shouldn't normally be required.

If you have more than one internet-connecting device, such as a couple of PCs, or a PC and an Xbox, it is well worth investing in a router. ICS is all very well, but it can slow your PC, is flaky on Win98SE/ME machines, and needs you to keep your PC switched on in order to use Live.

### Live Wireless

Many people have the broadband "socket" in a bedroom, hallway, or study. If the socket is not in the same room as the Xbox, you have a wiring job on your hands, which will involve running cables around your house, and probably drilling holes and lifting floorboards if you want to make a good job of it. With the cost of wireless networking coming down, you can now cheaply connect up your Xbox wirelessly to broadband and it isn't as hard as you'd think.

#### What you need

Firstly, we would recommend you either have a router, or use this opportunity to buy a router with built in WiFi. Look for something with "801.11b" compatibility "11a" is pretty much dead, and although faster, "11g" has only recently had a standard ratified and some 11g equipment is not fully compatible with other 11g kit as yet. 11g is around 54Mbps, and 11b is 11Mbps, but even 11Mbps is much faster than most people's broadband connections and is easily enough for Xbox gaming. Note also that not all 11g kit that is advertised as 11b backwards compatible actually is 100% Linksys is particularly guilty of this.

If you don't get a WiFi router, you'll need a Wireless

Access Point (WAP). A WAP is basically a wireless hub, to which other wireless devices connect. Again, look for 11b compatibility. Plug this into your existing router, or into your modem or PC if you're going for the ICS or Direct Connection options.

That's one half sorted - now you need something to plug into the Xbox. For a PC to wirelessly network, you have numerous options a USB WiFi adapter, a WiFi PCI card, PCMCIA WiFi adapter, etc. Since you only have an RJ45 port to use on an Xbox, you're limited to just one: a wireless bridge.

A wireless bridge connects to your Xbox with a (usually) crossover Cat5 cable, and as the name suggests, provides a bridge from the Xbox to your WAP. Most WAPs and wireless bridges will automatically configure themselves when they 'see' each other, although they come with configuration programs should that fail. Provided they're both 11b capable, you shouldn't have any problems, especially if the bridge and WAP/WiFi router are the same brand.

Note also that some WAPs can be configured to be used as bridges, but as WAPs are generally more expensive than wireless bridges, it is a bit overkill for Xbox Live!

### Live FAQ

#### Can I play online without buying a Live kit? I don't want the headset anyway.

No. And Yes. You can't access Live without buying the starter kit, as you need the serial number. Some Live titles do now come with a free two month trial, however. A Live account allows access to all Live features, such as downloadable content and global high scores. Alternatively, there is a program called xbconnect which allows you to play games designed for the Xbox system link feature (notably Halo) over the internet instead of a LAN. Basically, you run it on your PC, which acts as a proxy for system link games. Because of internet speeds being lower than LAN ones, your mileage may vary due to lag, but there have been many good reports, for Halo at least. This is *not* Xbox Live, though.

#### Can I download games on Live?

Not exactly, no. Many Live games have downloadable content, and it is feasible that some games may have downloadable mini-games in the future. There is no way, currently, of downloading entire games via Live.

#### Can I surf the internet with Live?

No. Live does not include a web browser. You could, however, mod your Xbox, install Linux and surf that way. This will of course void your warranty, and may lead to the next question...

#### I've heard that modchips can 'lock out' Live accounts – is this true?

Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on your stance on modding), this is true. Microsoft can detect whether you have a modchip installed or not, and if you have, your Xbox is blocked from Live. Even getting a new Live account won't help you, as it is your Xbox itself that is blacklisted. There are three solutions: Don't mod your Xbox, mod your Xbox with a modchip that can be switched off (and remember to switch it off before you use Live each time!), or have two Xboxes, one that's modded and one that's unmodded.

#### Can I change my Gamertag?

No. Your Gamertag is for life. You can of course disuse it, and buy a new starter kit.

#### If my Xbox is connected to the internet, it is vulnerable to viruses?

There are currently no known viruses for the Xbox, but you never know what enterprising virus authors could come up with in the future.



# Seaman Diary (part 7)

In this final installment, **Rev. Owen Allaway** witnesses the evolutionary end of the digital fish people and says farewell. Try not to cry, tearful reader...

## Saturday

The day begins with a bit more religious talk, Frogman asking me if, despite the fact that I don't believe in a god or gods, I consider myself a spiritual person. I tell him no and he takes this to mean that I don't think about religious or spiritual issues at all. "That's not what I meant," I say through gritted teeth. But he doesn't understand. After our conversation I sit and watch for a while. "I'm not letting this DNA go to waste." Oh dear. I guess this is mating time again.

One Frogman hops over to the other. He rests a webbed hand tenderly on the other's shoulder and they lock tentacles. There is only one 'pulse' of the tentacle and then they disengage. Although they look tired, neither one dies. I breathe a sigh of relief. Sex does not always lead to death in Seaman world. Then one Frogman turns to me and tells me that more of his memory has returned. He tells me a story.



Back in ancient Egypt the son of the Pharaoh and the daughter of a priest fell in love. The Pharaoh forbid the union, due to the difference in the lovers' castes. The priest, who looked more kindly on the youngsters, asked the advice of the god Thoth. Thoth decided to

change to the two lovers into beasts, that one day in the future they could evolve once more and be reunited when their union would not be forbidden.

It's a touching story in many ways, but I refuse - refuse! - to believe that my Frogmen are royalty. No way. Now he's recovered his memories the Frogman wants to escape the tank. To do this he wants to jump from the big rock at the back of the tank to the ring that's hanging down into the tank. I always thought that this ring was a thermometer, or something like that. The Frogman climbs to the top of the rock. When he says, "Now," I am to say, "Jump!". "Now!".

I immediately say "Jump!" into the mic.

The Frogman doesn't move. Then I hear the VMU beep. I pause, confused, until I remember that the VMU beeping is the cue for you to say something. I told the Frogman to jump too soon. So I tell him to jump again and he leaps from the rock... and crashes to the floor. He doesn't seem to want to try again. I play some DoA2 and Soul Calibur, go down the supermarket, that sort of thing.

When I get back to the tank the Frogman tells me he's worked up enough nerve to try again. This time I wait for the beep before shouting. The result, however, is the same. But now he's done it twice, the Frogman seems eager to try again. Once more he perches atop the rock. Once more I give the command at the correct time. And this time, the result is different. This time the Frogman doesn't even jump. As he makes his preparations he slips and tumbles

down the side of the rock, landing in an undignified heap on the floor. I laugh - but not into the microphone. I expect he's feeling bad enough as it is.

Later, we try once more. The same drill. I watch the Frogman leap. He grabs the ring. Success! His weight pulls the ring down into the tank. And as the ring falls, the back of the tank rises like a theatre curtain. For the first time I see what was behind the tank. Welcome to the jungle. My Frogmen immediately run towards it, towards freedom. And away from me. Once they are both out one of the Frogmen turns to me and thanks me for all the help I've given him. And he tells me to tap on the glass, sometime, saying it's his parting gift to me.

One of the Frogmen hops off, deeper into the forest. The other walks left, until he leaves the area I can see. I watch him disappear off the TV screen and I feel...

...To be honest, I'm not sure how I feel. I'm pleased that Frogmen are free. I'm proud that I made it this far. But I'm sad that they don't seem to need me anymore. There are no controls in the jungle. No heater, no sprinkler. My children have left home. I confirm this by leaving for a while and then returning. Leonard tells me that I am no longer needed, but that I am free to visit. He also gives me a longer version of the origin story that the Frogman told me earlier. I sit and watch the jungle until I start worrying about burn in. I try right tapping on the glass. The Frogmen both come to see what the fuss is and a beat starts up in time to my clicking. It's kind of fun, but I'm not in the mood.

### Sunday

I check in and receive a major shock. Leonard has gone. There is no, "Welcome to the laboratory of Jean-Paul Gasse." Nothing. Both Frogmen are in the visible part of the jungle. One comes up to me and starts talking to me about my family. Asking me whether I get on with them, that sort of thing. An old school style conversation. Not everything has changed. In the evening I decide that I don't need the moth cage anymore. I take the seeds that are in there and drop them into the jungle, to see if anything will grow. Then I take a couple of larvae and drop them in the item storage area, just in case. Then I realise that if I'm ever going to restart the moth cage from scratch I'm going to need seeds. Okay, maybe there'll be more tomorrow. For something to do, I try the right click trick again. This time I keep going. The Frogmen start to dance to the beat, which keeps pace with my click

speed. I can really make those Frogmen jump by hammering on the trigger. At certain speeds instruments and vocals float into the mix. And after a few seconds of this words appear on the screen. The end credits.

### Monday

I check back in. Still no Leonard. I must accept the fact that he's gone for good. As I watch a storm starts. It's not much more than a quick shower, but when it's over the seeds I planted yesterday have begun to grow. The one Frogman I can see complains that I'm up too early. In the moth cage, everything is normal, but I have no more seeds yet. In short, nothing much is happening. I've seen Seaman's credits and although I can still visit, I am no longer needed. I have heard cryptic comments about how when you think Seaman's over, you're only half way there. But do I believe this? I'm not sure. It seems to me that I've done my job. There

are a few loose ends. The mating on Saturday. Is one of the Frogmen pregnant? In his last speech Leonard said that the Frogmen had escaped to continue to the next stage of their evolution. Are there more mutations to come? But I still can't help but feel that my job is over. And that being the case, there is no need to continue this diary. Seaman has been an experience like no other. Part game, part virtual pet, part tech demo, part lesson in evolution, part love story. If and when something happens, I'll be sure to update you. It's like when a TV series finishes and they make TV movies instead. Inspector Morse springs to mind. I suspect that there will be more happening. But I also suspect that it won't be happening as quickly as it has been. Who knows, I may be wrong and I may be back with an update tomorrow as normal. But I think it's unlikely.

Thanks for reading. Live long and prosper.

## My Top 5

# My Top 5...

## 5 Line Bomb - Bomberman

You have to combine it with a large number of bombs, but when you do, the ability to completely seal off your opponent's escape route is one of the best multiplayer moments ever.

## 3 Three Red Shells - Mario Kart 64

Effectively two power-ups in one. When you first get them, the shells act as a shield, protecting you from other attacks. And if anyone overtakes you, they'll be hit up the backside with a homing missile.

## 1 Dodecahedron - Monkey Race (Super Monkey Ball)

Kieron has been leading for the whole race, I have slowly catching him. He's about to turn the final corner, for certain victory. I hit him with a dodecahedron, he bounces off the course, and John and I sail past him. He's not happy; we are.

Always one for picking up anything that he may find in a Womble-like manner, **Tim Miller** recalls his Top 5 Power-Ups...

## 4 The Force - R-Type

Love shoot-em-ups but don't like being in the line of fire? R-type's Force meant you could take cover behind a wall and send something else to do your dirty work for you. Inspired.

## 2 Speed Shoes - Sonic the Hedgehog

The change to Supersonic's not really a power-up, or that'd have been in the list instead. When you first play Sonic, it's in a different league to other platformers for one main reason - the speed. And the first time you get a boost on top of this... It's just great.



# Letters

A whole two letters and we didn't even have to make them up this issue!

## Be So Nice

Hi there. I am just one of many people who enjoy your **ugvm**. In your issue 5 that recently came out, you had an article about a built in translator that the Nintendo Gamecube has that some refer to as "The Frail Loop." I found the article very interesting, and wanted to find out some more about this. Unfortunately, I couldn't find anymore information, so I was wondering if you could be so nice as to send me a few links to where sites or pages where it is talked about. Thank you.

**Robert Benavides, via email**

*Oh Robert - how can we break it to you? Unfortunately, due to some falling out between Nintendo and Microsoft (over who got the last chocolate biscuit at a recent meeting, or so we have been informed), it looks like the Frail Loop is no more. We suggest you buy both a Gamecube and an Xbox and then glue them together. It's almost the same, isn't it? Ed.*

## Blip in the Output

The Nintendo difference. It's a phrase that staunch Nintendo fans use against the perceived mediocrity of games of the Playstation generation while the latter use it to pigeonhole Nintendo as gaming for kids.

Silly fan-boy disputes aside (just because you can't afford the other console, it doesn't mean you have to berate it to feel better about yourself) and as a old-school Nintendo gamer (Game & Watching when I was four), I'm beginning to wonder what the hell the Nintendo difference is anymore. Colourful graphics aside, is there really any difference between a Nintendo game and one that is released exclusively on the Xbox or Playstation2?

Did anyone think that either Zelda: The Wind Waker or Super Mario Sunshine were the pinnacle of gaming over the past year? Perhaps a few

people did, but probably not as many as those who thought Ocarina of Time and Mario 64 were genius gaming experiences. Or, to go one more generation back, even Link's Awakening and Super Mario World.

I'm getting tired. Tired of watching Link saving the world from Ganondorf and tired of Mario saving the Princess yet again. I've done it so many times before, why do we have to do it again? It's like in Super Mario Bros, when Mario defeats *yet another* Bowser only to be confronted by Toad saying "But our Princess is in another castle!" It's Groundhog Day, where everything in the Nintendo world stays the same, except I'm one year older and *that* much closer to leaving this earth. Are Nintendo really that much different from the most infamous sufferer of sequelitis, Electronic Arts?

Okay, so that's a bit harsh. At least Nintendo games are enjoyable and the sequels only come out once in a term of each US President. (Food for thought: Would Fifa games be any better if EA only released one every four years? And the answer is: No). But where's the invention and originality? Where is the magic touch from the finger of Mr. Miyamoto (whose only real magic touch recently seems to be making a multiplayer Pac-Man and giving it away free. Hang on a second - THAT ACTUALLY IS GENIUS!)?

It's ironic that the best thing to come out of Nintendo over the past year is Wario Ware Inc, a game which is notable for not feeling much like a Nintendo game at all: insane, irreverent, rude, schizophrenic and, horror of horrors, post-modern. All this, and a Game Boy game too. You know, for kids.

And yet at the same time Wario Ware Inc is the one game that really does bear resemblance to classic Nintendo games: easy to pick up, immensely enjoyable and accessible to all.

It is a shame then, that this seems to be merely a blip in the output of Nintendo. On the horizon, there is merely the promise of more Starfox, more Pikmin, more Zelda and hey, even more Mario. Oh, and a mad Donkey Kong game involving banging a bongo drum to J-Pop and anime theme tunes.

Maybe there is hope after all.

**OJLim, via email**

*Crivens, OJ - that's telling 'em! Ed.*

# ugvm

needs YOU!

**ugvm** is written by you, the people. And that's why it is what it is. Rather like Popeye, but without the pipe. As a result, it doesn't write itself, unlike other magazines which do (erm, are you sure about that? **Tim**).

You can help us by providing. Providing articles. Reviews. Features. Comments. Letters. Suggestions. The one someone suggested about us shaving Tim's head and painting a target on it was great, until the Americans bombed him.\*

The magazine is what you make it. If you send it in, we can edit it, print it, and the whole world can see your text. *I said text.*

Here's what you do. Type up your submission, and send it to [editor@ugvm.org.uk](mailto:editor@ugvm.org.uk). Make sure it's all in plain text (so Notepad or Simpletext are good choices to type it into). Have a look at the review guidelines on the **ugvm** website ([www.ugvm.org.uk](http://www.ugvm.org.uk)) before you start though, or we'll send skidpro round to pee through your letterbox. We're not joking.

All fairly obvious really. The only thing we ask, and this is a legal thing and so quite important, is that the work is your own, and you are not just cut-and-pasting some review or article from another website or magazine.

As always, we the **ugvm** staff can be found in the newsgroup [uk.games.video.misc](mailto:uk.games.video.misc), so you're free to talk to us there.

Please give generously.

\* they were supposed to be bombing themselves. Or Iraq. Or something.

## Hold The Back Page

Last issue, I talked about the problems with buying too many games. Since then, I have bought almost 50 more. Ho hum.

My latest problem is with the evil known as eBay. I followed a link to an auction there from the **ugvm** newsgroup, and then continued to browse. An hour later, I'd bid on 6 WonderSwan games, and as I type they've all arrived and I've had a play with each one.

Final Fantasy II and IV look great. I can't figure out what the hell I'm doing, although I vaguely recall the plot from the NES versions, since everything is in Japanese. But they look ace. SD Gundam Hero (Blue) is almost as swish, but no more understandable. Z Turbo Something Spinny Wotsit Happy League (or whatever) appears to be a fun RPG with Beyblade overtones. Nice music, great cut scenes, clanky metallic sound effects. And completely incomprehensible.

Thank god for Tane o Makudori. I bought it, like SD Gundam, because it had a nice looking box. With a bird on it. I was a bit apprehensive, since although the advert said it was a puzzle game, and puzzle games are usually pretty simple, I have memories of wanting to smash my Game Boy due to the frustrations of trying to figure out how to play a Japanese copy of Glocal Hexcite. Thankfully, it was bloody obvious and what a great game it is too.

Besides, there's a cute little Japanese picture storybook in the box, which tells the plot of the game. I assume. For all I know, it might just have pretty pictures and the words read "You can't understand a bloody word, can you, you stupid gaijin", but I'd like to think it isn't.

Despite the, erm, setbacks of not being able to read enough Japanese to play some of these games (oh and Sen Goku Shi, which I bought a while ago: Advance Wars with samurais, possibly, but who knows?), I was straight back on eBay looking for more WonderSwan 'gems'. Winging its way to me right now is Flash - bought on the strength of the cute ninja on the cover, swiftly followed by another game about hamsters 'Buy It Now'ed simply because it has a hamster figurine in the box. I don't even like hamsters, for crying out loud.

It isn't just local to WonderSwan games either. Phantasy Star III and Shining Force II fell through my letterbox this week, and although I've played them both and completed PS3 about seven thousand times, and they really were L@@K MINT, they're Japanese. Excellent.

Oooh look! Final Fantasy I, Buy It Now for just US\$8. Click. Damn.

**deKay**

## Next Issue in ugvm



### **We just don't know!**

Actually, that isn't entirely true. What we do know is that we'll have stacks more Reviews. Some great Features, and all of the regulars. Except the Seaman Diary, for that has now ended. Worry not, as there is a worthy replacement planned!

### **Why are we so vague?**

Because we don't want other magazines stealing our ideas, that's why. Actually, that isn't entirely true either - it's because you lot, the great unwashed, haven't sent us anything yet. And we can only create a magazine, if you send us stuff to create it with!

### **See you next time!**

Same bat-time, same bat-channel. Oh ALRIGHT! We'll let you in on some stuff for next issue: Viewtiful Joe review, games on non-gaming platforms, Jim naked...

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